







**TWELVE STUDIES IN  
SOVIET RUSSIA**





**TWELVE STUDIES**  
*in*  
**SOVIET RUSSIA**

Edited for the New Fabian  
Research Bureau

by MARGARET I. COLE

*With an Introduction by*  
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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS BOOK consists of twelve essays on different aspects of the present life and organisation of society in the U.S.S.R. It makes no pretence either at covering the whole of the ground or at comprehensiveness in its study of any of the subjects with which it deals. Its authors are keenly aware that the time which they have been able to spend in the U.S.S.R. has been far too short for any such comprehensiveness to be even remotely possible. All that is claimed for the book is that it embodies a real attempt by the various authors to answer by personal study on the spot certain questions which they had found it impossible to answer, or to answer satisfactorily, from reading the available books about the working of the Soviet system. That is to say, while the authors of these essays were able to spend only a very limited time in the U.S.S.R., each of them went out for a definite purpose, knowing within fairly narrow limits what questions he was setting out to answer and determined to concentrate upon finding the answers to these specific questions rather than to be diverted into using his stay merely for getting a general impression of conditions in the U.S.S.R. It is claimed, then, for these essays, that they are not mere tourists' impressions, but the results of a systematic attempt by a number of independent experts to get at the truth about certain definite problems of Soviet life and organisation, and it is claimed further that, while they are silent altogether about some vital aspects of the Soviet economy, and make no pretence of touching more than lightly upon others, they do cover certain ground which has been covered either inadequately or not at all in the numerous studies of the Soviet system which have been hitherto available for English readers.

Each author is of course solely responsible for the material

embodied in his essay and for the conclusions which he has drawn from it. It is not the object of this book to present any agreed collective statement of conclusions, but rather a series of independent pictures drawn by experts in different fields of social and kindred studies, the authors having no more than this in common—that they went out under the auspices of a Socialist organisation, the New Fabian Research Bureau, and that they were particularly on the lookout for such features of the Soviet system as seemed likely to be of special interest and importance to Socialists in Great Britain. The entire group went to Russia under the auspices of the New Fabian Research Bureau, and the work to be done by each investigator was mapped out for him some time in advance by a special committee of the Bureau with a definite plan in mind. To some extent the Bureau had naturally to cut its coat according to its cloth, and to choose for investigation those special subjects for which it was able to obtain the right investigators, and the original plan had to some extent to be modified through the dropping out of one or two of those who had originally intended to make the journey. This, for example, explains the absence of any special study of the Russian transport system and also of the medical and public health services. But it was felt better to leave these subjects blank than to attempt to find last-minute substitutes for those who were compelled to drop out. For it was an essential part of the plan of work that those who made the journey should have spent some months in advance in England preparing themselves by special study for the particular field of investigation which they were to undertake.

The result is, we venture to believe, a valuable contribution to the rapidly growing volume of literature about the U.S.S.R. In especial, these essays throw, we think, fresh light on the working of the financial system of the Soviet Union both in its public finance in the narrower sense and in the relations between public finance and industry under a system of socialised enterprise. They embody, too, data and conclusions concerning the pricing of commodities in

Russia, and the standard of living of the Russian worker, which are not available elsewhere, and they supplement, especially on the cultural and social side, those numerous studies which have practically confined their attention to the more narrowly economic and political aspects of the Soviet system. Mrs. Mitchison's chapter throws fresh light on the position and status of the intellectual worker, and Mr. Pritt's is likely to put the legal system of the Soviet Union in quite a new light for most readers. In a field which has been more extensively surveyed already, there is much fresh material in Mr. Haldane's chapter on "Power and Industrial Development," and Mr. John Morgan, who had a colossal field to cover, presents the first objective survey that has yet been possible of the most recent phases of the Russian policy of socialisation in agriculture.

While we have said that each of the authors of these essays spent some time in preliminary study of his subject before going to Russia, and therefore went on his journey with a reasonably clear knowledge of the special problems to which he was trying to find the answers, it remains of course true that most of them, as soon as they settled down to actual investigation in Russia itself, were speedily compelled to reframe, in the light of what they found, many of the questions which they had gone out intending to ask. We remember, for example, that when the journey was originally being planned, one of the questions to which we were early determined to find an answer was that of the internal value of the rouble in Russia in relation to the purchasing power of the wages of the Russian workers. Readers of Mr. Mitchison's chapter will soon see for themselves how entirely unanswerable this question turned out to be in its original form. For, in effect, the rouble has no definable internal purchasing power except in relation to particular classes of purchasers or types of purchases. In other words, the rouble has many different values, each of which has to be separately ascertained, and it is quite impossible to arrive at any figure of the cost of living in the U.S.S.R. corresponding with any approach to accuracy to the cost-of-living figures which are



compiled and published in capitalist countries. This question of the varying value of the rouble in different cases is very closely bound up with another question to which our party set out to find an answer—that of the degrees of inequality of remuneration between workers of different types and grades ; for, as Mr. Mitchison points out, one effect of the varying purchasing power of the rouble is greatly to reduce the real commodity value of the higher wages and salaries, and to make the effective approach to equality of real income much greater than it would appear to be on the basis of the wage figures alone. These are merely two instances of what we suppose was the experience of every one of the investigators in his own special field. His preliminary study of the available material helped him very greatly in making the best use of the actual time spent in Russia, but the questions which he did succeed in answering as a result of his visit were in many cases widely different from those which the group had formulated in advance as needing to be answered.

We have no desire in this preface either to prejudge any of the conclusions reached by the separate essayists, or to make any attempt at a synthesis of what they have to say. For, as we have explained, the object of the New Fabian Research Bureau in arranging the visit was to acquire and make available fresh information about conditions in Russia, and not to formulate any collective attitude or policy towards the great Russian experiment. We have therefore confined ourselves in this preface to explaining what the New Fabian Research Bureau had in mind in arranging for the visit to take place, and what it has in mind now in offering these essays to the public. There remains only the pleasant duty of thanking the Russian authorities for the help which they so readily gave in putting our investigators into touch with the people they wanted to see, and in allowing, despite the almost overwhelming spate of visitors which flowed this summer through the U.S.S.R., generous facilities for seeing on the spot the actual working of the various Soviet institutions which it was their purpose to study. We

have also to thank the various members and friends of the New Fabian Research Bureau who, by their financial and personal help, made the visit possible.

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# A GENERAL VIEW OF THE SOVIET ECONOMY

*with Special Reference to Planning*

by

HUGH DALTON

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## *Errata in Dr. Dalton's chapter*

*Page 15, last line:* For "Hutchison's" read "Mitchison's"

*Page 17, line 17:* For "general" read "occasional"

*Page 25, line 4:* For "Republic" read "Republics"

*Page 26, line 2:* For "commercial" read "communal"



**IT IS BETTER** to have a plan than not. Common sense, founded on common experience, suggests that this is true of most forms of human activity, whether individual or collective. Socialists believe that this truth applies with particular force to the economic life of modern communities. And some, who are not Socialists, incline to hold the same opinion, though they would give it a different practical application.<sup>1</sup>

The economic system of the Soviet Union is deliberately based upon a plan ; the systems of the Capitalist West, in time of peace, are based on " private enterprise," which is, in principle, the negation of a " planned economy."

Capitalism, of course, does not exclude all elements of conscious planning, either by organs of the State or by groups of private individuals. Without a minimum of such elements, acting as a sort of social cement, any society would fall to pieces. But the contrast between the Soviet Union and the Capitalist West lies in this—that in the former, planning is the principle which dominates all economic life, whereas in the latter it is subordinated, in greater or less degree,<sup>2</sup> to the contrary principle of private enterprise.

There are, of course, other contrasts also, notably in the scope of private property, which in the Soviet Union is limited to " clothing, furniture, books, miscellaneous household utensils and furnishings, and bonds of the Soviet Government."<sup>3</sup> It is one of the fundamental doctrines of Soviet

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the address of Sir Basil Blackett, in *The World's Economic Crisis* (Halley Stewart Lectures, 1931), and the remarks of Sir Arthur Salter in his *Recovery*, p. 21 and pp. 208–218.

<sup>2</sup> In less degree, for example, in the Corporative State of Fascist Italy than in the United States of America.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin Hoover, *The Economic Life of Soviet Russia*, p. 1. To this list should, perhaps, be added a part share in house property owned by a co-operative group. See Mr. Hutchison's chapter below.

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economists that a Planned Economy is impossible except under Socialism. If this be true, in the full sense which they intend, the two contrasts which I have noted merge into one ; the first implies the second. It may, on the other hand, be argued that there are many possible types of Planned Economy and many possible variations and degrees of Socialism. It may be held that, even with a measure of social control far less extensive than that which prevails to-day in the Soviet Union, the adoption of the principle of economic planning can lead to large and beneficial results.

I shall not pursue this interesting question here, since my present object is a more limited one. I shall seek only to give some account of certain aspects of the Soviet economic system.

### II

There are absent from this system many features familiar in the Capitalist West, not only, for example, Stock Exchanges and Produce Exchanges, with their accompaniment of private speculation, but also unemployment, with its accompaniment of wasted labour power on a vast scale. Judged by Western standards, Soviet agriculture and industry may be inefficient, but the demand for labour, particularly in the industrial centres, is in excess of the supply, and no one need remain for more than a few days without a job. For the present at least, unemployment has been planned away.

Again, there is in the Soviet Union no deliberate limitation of output, for fear lest " too much " be produced. Output may fall short of the Plan, but this is a matter for condemnation, not for thanksgiving. Fish is not thrown back into the sea, as in England, nor coffee burnt, as in Brazil, in order to raise its price, nor is corn used to fire railway engines, because it does not pay to feed the starving unemployed of the cities, as in the United States. In the Soviet Union fish may go bad through faulty distribution, or corn

be scarce through faulty cultivation or poor harvests. But such deficiencies of supply are deplored, not welcomed, and efforts are made to prevent their recurrence. The aim is always to increase supply, even, if possible, beyond the figures of the Plan. The capitalist phenomenon of the "limited market" is absent. "Production, not for profit, but for use," is the governing principle, though the competing claims of rival and urgent uses present a continuing problem. But this is solved, whether well or ill, by authoritative decision, and with reference to the Plan.

Equally out of place, therefore, are many ideas familiar to capitalist economic thought. There is no "automatic adjustment" of wages, nor, except in the free market, of prices, according to the pressure of "supply and demand." For wages, prices, and supplies of particular goods are subject to planning, and rationing. Except in connection with the general issue of State loans, the rate of interest, as a regulator of the demand for capital, or of its supply, or of its distribution between different industries or localities, is an instrument which is not employed in the Soviet economy. Nor is competitive rent a determinant of the use to which land shall be put. Here, therefore, the economist, whose thinking has been limited by the institutions of the Capitalist West, must revise his conceptions and his categories.

The general working of this Planned Economy has been described in detail by various writers,<sup>1</sup> whose works should be consulted by any serious student. Here I shall only attempt to give a supplementary account, based upon my own observations and upon interviews with persons entitled to speak with knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> I would make particular mention of Professor Calvin Hoover's *Economic Life of Soviet Russia* (Macmillan), Dr. Friedrich Pollock's *Die Planwirtschaftliche Versuche in der Sowjetunion* (Hirschfeld, Leipzig), *Social Economic Planning in the U.S.S.R.*, by various members of the Soviet Delegation to the World Social Economic Congress at Amsterdam, published by the International Industrial Relations Association at the Hague, and *Die Rote Wirtschaft*, by various authors (Ost-Europa-Verlag, Berlin), of which an English version is promised shortly.



## III

In the summer of 1932 the period of the First Five Year Plan was within a few months of completion, and the Second Five Year Plan was in an advanced stage of preparation. The question whether the First has "succeeded" is apt to provoke misleading debate. In some lines of production, and in some districts, the original figures of the Plan have been surpassed; in others not. The original figures, moreover, have been revised, generally upwards, during the five year period. One of the most sensational of the new industrial ventures, the U.K.K., or Ural-Kuznetsk Combine, including the new iron and steel works at Magnitogorsk, was an afterthought, not included in the original Plan.<sup>1</sup> The planning process, it should be emphasised, is continuous, not spasmodic. The official figures issued from time to time serve, indeed, as instructions to all whom they may concern, but, seen from the centre, they form an elastic framework within which estimates are continually modified in the light of experience, or of expectation.

What can safely be asserted of the First Five Year Plan is that it has created a formidable material apparatus of heavy industry and electrical supply,<sup>2</sup> and that it has set going a unique type of industrial revolution, unique both in its speed, its geographical extension, and its planned Socialist basis. On the other hand, for reasons to be mentioned below, this material apparatus is not yet organised or handled with any high degree of efficiency. It seems, moreover, though the published statistics are inadequate for making a precise comparison, that the standard of living of the majority of workers, both in town and country, has fallen during the period of the Plan, partly owing to its inefficient execution, but partly because consumption has been deliberately sacrificed to construction, and light industry to heavy, and partly also owing to the sharp fall in

<sup>1</sup> Molotov, *The Second Five Year Plan*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Of agriculture and of the "cultural" parts of the Plan I deliberately say nothing, for others speak of these in later chapters of this book.

the world prices of Soviet exports, which has necessitated an increased volume of exports to pay for a given quota of imports.

Concerning the Second Five Year Plan, which is to run from the beginning of 1933 till the end of 1937, I spoke with persons in authority both at the centre and in the districts—in Moscow on the one hand, and in Leningrad, the Urals, the Tartar Republic, the Lower Volga, and the Ukraine on the other.

Those at the centre and those in the districts will naturally describe the process of planning rather differently, each stressing more heavily their own part in it. In Moscow, when I said that I was going to the Urals, I was told, rather grimly, that there I should naturally hear a good deal from the Ural point of view, but that this had to be harmonised with other, and possibly conflicting, points of view. And in a certain provincial centre, after I had listened to a very able exposition of the local programme of development, when I asked whether discussions with Moscow did not occupy much time and lead to many differences of opinion, I was answered by a wink. Each district and each industry naturally pitches its claims high, and these have to be scaled down at the centre within the limits of what seems practicable.

The technique of planning has been developed empirically. There is, as yet, very little theory behind it, though there are, of course, certain general objectives, of which I shall speak later. "Our practice," I was informed during one interview, "has gone ahead faster than our theory." Advances and adjustments have been made experimentally. The method of trial and error has been courageously applied.

Perhaps there is not much room now for original theory, the main lines of the Planned Economy having been laid down. Or, perhaps, the theory will be developed later, as in capitalist countries, where the practical men, responsible for taking decisions, have seldom troubled much about it. No industrial revolution elsewhere was guided by

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theorists. These only came along afterwards, to point the moral and explain the tale.

Planning, it was admitted in one conversation, is definitely post-Marxian. No direct guidance concerning its problems is to be found in any of the Marxian writings. The literature of Soviet planning, I was informed, begins with a letter from Lenin to Kuibyshev in 1920 on the need for a plan for electrification. But it was soon realised that this by itself was not enough ; plans for various forms of economic activity had to be co-ordinated.

### IV

I will now set out briefly what I learned about the process of making the Second Five Year Plan, first from conversations in Moscow, at Gosplan (the Central State Planning Department), and in other State departments and scientific institutes, and second at Kazan, the capital of the Tartar Republic. This will enable the version of the centre to be contrasted with that of the circumference.

As seen from Moscow, the procedure was as follows. In February 1932 the main lines of the Plan were adopted, after an explanatory speech by Molotov, in the form of resolutions approved by the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party.<sup>1</sup> Gosplan in the next few months worked out these main lines in considerable detail, both by industries and by regions. Each industry and each Regional Planning Committee (i.e. each local Gosplan) were simultaneously working out their own plans. These had to be sent in to Gosplan by August 5th. During this same preparatory period a number of special conferences had been held in Moscow, on the location of industries, on fuel, on electrical development, and so forth. These conferences were attended by specialists from Gosplan

<sup>1</sup> The text of this important and interesting speech, and of the resolutions, is published under the title *The Second Five Year Plan* (Moscow, 1932).

and by workers in the industries concerned. A group from the Moscow Institute of Economic Research was also working on the problem of accumulation and consumption in connection with the Plan.

Next came the period of the "mounting of the Plan," from August 5th to September 15th, when Gosplan, in the light of any amendments to its first draft suggested by industries or regions, was to prepare a revised draft for submission to the Council of Commissars. In preparing this draft, Gosplan was assisted by a Temporary Commission of its own specialists and of representatives of the various commissariats. But the main work of synthesis would be carried out, we were told, by the Central Planning Bureau, one of the key departments of Gosplan. The Council of Commissars would then comment on the revised Gosplan draft, and, after considering these comments, Gosplan would submit a Final Plan by the end of the year.

So far as the problem of credit is concerned, the head of Gosbank (the State Bank) can defend his position in the Council of Commissars. He can also exercise his influence as Vice-Chairman of the Commissariat of Finance and as a member of Sto (the Council of Labour and Defence). He is represented, moreover, on the Temporary Commission. Prombank,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, is not represented on the Temporary Commission, and has no part in the framing of the Plan.

As regards the location of industry, the general aim in the First Five Year Plan was the creation of a large number of medium-sized industrial centres. This aim will continue to be pursued in the Second Plan, new industrial centres being contemplated in Central Asia and other regions, where hitherto there has been little industrialisation.

The resolutions, upon which the Second Plan is founded, call for a threefold increase by the end of 1937 in the rate of output of consumable goods, for an increase by two and a half times in the rate of output of producers' goods, for

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Gosbank and Prombank see Mr. Pethick-Lawrence's chapter below.

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a co-ordination of resources and plans between adjoining districts, for the abolition of the rationing system for consumers' goods, and for the final elimination of social classes. It is thus contemplated that the private market will have disappeared by the end of 1937 and that there will be for every commodity only one price, fixed by the Government from time to time.

I was informed that the procedure whereby the Plan is "worked out simultaneously both from above and from below"—a copy of Gosplan's first draft going to every factory and collective farm and being discussed there—is a much more marked feature of preparation for the Second, than it was for the First, Five Year Plan. Hence has arisen the slogan : "Millions make the Plan."

### v

I now pass from Moscow to Kazan, in order to present the planning process as seen from a regional capital. Economically, I was informed, the Tartar Republic was a neglected area under Tsardom. It had no industries except soap and leather, which worked exclusively for the Army. It was starved of railways and of river transport, though containing three navigable rivers. Agriculture was primitive, and educational and cultural opportunities few, especially for the Tartar section of the population. Much progress, I was told, had already been made in remedying all these deficiencies, and much more was confidently expected in the near future, particularly as the Tartar Republic was to develop light, rather than heavy, industry, and thus to be one of the regions specially favoured in the Second Five Year Plan.

On the basis of the resolutions already referred to, the Tartar Republic, like all other regions in the Soviet Union, had prepared a detailed plan. "Millions make the Plan," they repeated to me, "not just a few people sitting in Moscow." Each of the forty-three administrative districts

of the Republic first made its local plan, and these were co-ordinated by the Tartar Gosplan at Kazan. Then the plan for the Tartar Republic was sent to Moscow. This and similar regional plans, my Kazan informants told me, would be accepted in principle, though they might be amended in detail. The central Government, however, would take into account the most appropriate distribution of industries, and the co-ordination of adjoining regional plans. Moscow sent round Planning Brigades of specialists to the regions to examine the local plans on the spot and make sure that they were practicable. Such a Brigade had just visited Kazan. It consisted of five members—experts respectively in economics, the chemical industry, the metal industry, transport and electricity. They came by air, stayed seven days, and made certain changes in the Tartar plan. The most important of these was the substitution of an electrical power plant for a plant for road-making machinery. The latter was being installed instead in an adjoining region. The Brigade had left by air that very day (July 24th). They had spent a month and a half in Moscow before they started on their tour, studying the various local plans that had been sent in.

The Tartar Republic, it was claimed, had fulfilled the First Five Year Plan in four years. As regards the Second, some parts of it had already been begun, e.g. new construction in the city of Kazan, the population of which was planned to increase from its present total of 240,000 to 600,000 at the end of 1937. The urban population in the Republic as a whole was to increase threefold, and new factories were to be built in towns where none existed now. Production, chiefly of light industry, was to increase tenfold.<sup>1</sup> Factories were already being built, or were planned, for making felt boots, films, chemicals, artificial rubber and paint. Existing factories for food production (e.g. macaroni)

<sup>1</sup> If the output of light industry is to increase threefold in the Soviet Union as a whole, it would naturally be planned to increase more than threefold in those regions, such as the Tartar Republic, where there is to be a special concentration of light industry.

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and metals were being extended. Machine building and railway-carriage building were to be started, and all these factories were to be fed with power from a new hydro-electric station on the River Kama. Two new railway lines were to be built, which would traverse thirty-three out of forty-three administrative districts of the Republic.

Further details of the Plan regarding mineral extraction, agriculture, education, housing and health were also given to me. But such details as I have quoted illustrate the general outline of the Second Five Year Plan as seen from a regional capital. It will be noticed that the regional version of plan-making differs a little from the Moscow version. Moscow lays more stress on the initiative of the central Gosplan ; the region lays more stress on its own initiative. I find it difficult, in the light of this and other accounts, to be sure who really makes the important decisions. Partly, no doubt, it depends on the strength of personalities. But I am inclined to suspect that the major influence generally lies at the centre rather than in the regions.

To maintain effective contact between the centre and the outlying regions is, at first sight, an almost insoluble problem, in view of the great distances and the poor quality of communications. But it may be worth noting that on several occasions I was told on my arrival in various cities that the leading people, to whom I carried introductions, in the local Gosplans, Finance Ministries or industrial establishments, were absent in Moscow, or were on their way to or from Moscow, and that they seemed generally to be making these journeys by air. I should also add that their understudies were generally very able and willing to give me all the information I sought.

## VI

It may be of interest to contrast with that of the Tartar Republic the very different type of planned industrial development proceeding in the Urals.

Here is a region, stretching from the edge of Europe some six hundred miles into Asia, and extending from the northern forests to the boundaries of the Central Asiatic Republic, more backward and neglected under Tsardom than was even the Tartar Republic, but possessing richer and more varied natural resources than any area of comparable size in the Soviet Union, or perhaps anywhere in the world. The wealth of the Urals is even yet only partly surveyed. But the survey has proceeded far enough since the Revolution to cause the Soviet Government to attempt here the most massive and ambitious of all the regional developments. Heavy industry is predominant in the Ural Plan, though mineral extraction is important, and light industry, agriculture and timber have their places. The rate of increase of industrial activity is higher here than anywhere else in the Union. Iron, I was informed, is found all the way down the Ural chain, and copper, lead, platinum, nickel, aluminium, zinc, gold and silver, asbestos and magnesium, are all present in the area. Large coal deposits are only in an early stage of exploitation, most of the coal now used being brought from farther east. There are large tracts of good agricultural land not yet cultivated, and the Northern and Middle Urals are heavily timbered.

Such a combination of resources is most exceptional and is receiving much attention in the Second Five Year Plan. The Ural district is an almost self-sufficient unit, and this holds out hopes not only of rapid development, but of great economies in long-distance transport charges.

The population of Sverdlovsk, the administrative capital, has increased from 75,000 in 1914 to 136,000 in 1926 and 430,000 in 1932. And Greater Sverdlovsk, within a radius of eighteen kilometres from the centre of the city, is planned to hold a population of a million and a half by the end of 1937. Here, as I found also at Stalingrad, Rostov and elsewhere, the new industrial plants stand some miles outside the old city, and it is an essential feature of the Plan to house the majority of the workers in close proximity



special enquiry. But, together with several of my travelling companions, I tried to investigate the other side of the system, namely price-fixing and rationing of producers' goods. We made enquiries into this problem both at Moscow and in the various regions which we visited. I am not satisfied that we got to the bottom of this complicated question, but it may be of interest to summarise some provisional conclusions.

By contrast with consumers' goods, there is no free market in producers' goods. The total supply is controlled by the planning authorities. Rationing, between different industrial undertakings, is determined by the Plan, though this, of course, may be modified from time to time. The price of all producers' goods, e.g. of coal of a particular quality, is fixed from time to time by the authorities in Moscow. The list of fixed prices is circulated throughout the Soviet Union, and the same price is charged to every purchaser. There is thus no price discrimination as between different undertakings or classes of undertakings. Costs of transport and local distribution charges have to be added, and included in the price paid by purchasers. But these costs also are fixed by authority.

The general basis of price-fixing for capital goods, we were told at more than one interview, is cost of production. This includes wages, cost of materials, cost of power, etc., and an allowance for depreciation of plant. It includes, also, an allowance for the taxation of the undertaking and for the profit which the undertaking is required to make for its own expansion. It includes an allowance for interest on, and repayment of, short-term loans from Gosbank for working capital, but no allowance for interest on, or repayment of, long-term loans from Prombank for fixed capital. These long-term "loans" are not really loans at all; they are, rather, grants in aid of capitalisation, conditional on the carrying out of the plan.

This, however, is only the general basis of price-fixing. Departures from the cost of production, as defined above, are not uncommon. Thus, we were told, agricultural

machinery was deliberately priced below its cost of production at the beginning of the First Five Year Plan. The cost of production, moreover, on which the price-fixers at the centre work, does not appear to be any one of the actual costs of production recorded by different undertakings, but a hypothetical cost of production, based upon data in the possession of Gosplan.

So much for price-fixing as seen from the centre. As seen from the circumference, it is much simpler. The list of prices fixed in Moscow is communicated to those in charge of a factory, say, in the Urals. It is their duty to appeal to Moscow against any price proposed to be charged, e.g. by another factory supplying material, if this is above the Moscow tariff. They have also the right to appeal to Moscow to reduce the price fixed for any commodity in which they are interested, e.g. the price of coal, or the cost of transport. Such appeals appear to be frequent. We were informed that the Commissariat for Heavy Industry had recently ordered a reduction in the price of coke, and had compelled a reorganisation of coke production, following complaints that the price was too high. Elsewhere we were told that, at the start of a new works, price-fixing for its products was admittedly experimental. At another factory which we visited we were told that a Commission of Enquiry from Sto had recently come down and found, from an examination of their books, that they had paid too much for their equipment.

The working of the price-fixing mechanism, both at the centre and at the circumference, illustrates, I think, the saying which I have already quoted: "Our practice has gone ahead faster than our theory." From day to day the method of trial and error is predominant over preconceived theories. Whether this is a source of strength or weakness, may be disputed.

Of the method of financing the Plan I shall say little, as the general question of Soviet Public Finance is dealt with by Mr. Pethick-Lawrence in a later chapter. A redistribution of economic resources, as between different industries

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and localities, takes place on a vast scale, through the medium of the State budgets, central and provincial. Some industries and localities pay in more than they draw out, and conversely. By comparison, the central Public Finance of capitalist countries seems a very elementary and unproductive affair, largely a fruitless culture of the dead wood of war debts and armaments. In the Soviet Union during the first Five Year Plan light industry was taxed to facilitate the creation of heavy industry, and the rate of capital accumulation and the proportion of the social income devoted to this purpose were higher than in any capitalist country at any time. The old argument of anti-Socialist economists—that a Socialist State would not save enough to provide a rising standard of life—has been stood, as Marx said of Hegel's dialectic, on its head. It is largely because in the last few years the Soviet State has saved so much, that the standard of life of its citizens has suffered, at least temporarily, a decline.

A prominent feature of Soviet finance in the last two years has been a substantial inflation, which was no part of the Plan.<sup>1</sup> This has prevented the realisation of the planned reductions in costs of production, reckoned in roubles. The effects of inflation, however, are not the same under the Soviet economic system as under capitalism. In particular, there is no class of private profiteers to be enriched by the Soviet inflation. Nor need inflation upset the conscious balance of the Plan, as it tends, according to some economists, to upset the precarious and unconscious balance of unplanned capitalist production. There is, however, some superficial resemblance between the latest economic phase in the Soviet Union and an inflationary boom under capitalism. But what will be of greater interest will be the

<sup>1</sup> Thus the monetary circulation, which was planned to rise to 3,200 million roubles in 1933, had already risen to 5,172 millions by October 1931, and to 5,786 millions by June 1932. And the volume of short credits granted by Gosbank, planned to reach 3,084 million roubles in 1931, had actually reached 4,760 millions in that year, an increase of over 50 per cent. (See *Die Rote Wirtschaft*, pp. 25, 124 and 132.)

next phase—the reaction of the Planned Economy to an unplanned inflation, and its power to control it.

It is, in my opinion, a pity that, since the middle of 1930, the official index numbers of prices and wages are no longer published. In the past the Soviet Government has set the pace in giving statistical information to the world ; recently, in more than one department, the statistical output has been falling, and this may provoke suspicions and unfriendly comment.

### VIII

The broad objectives of the Plan, on its economic side, are clear enough. To avoid the economic crises and trade fluctuations of capitalism ; to keep the whole working population in continuous employment and to raise their standard of living, without permitting the growth of large inequalities,<sup>1</sup> to a level higher than that of the workers in capitalist countries ; to achieve a large measure of economic self-sufficiency and, as a means to this end, to stimulate to the utmost the industrialisation of the country.

The aim of self-sufficiency is dictated partly by pride and partly, it is said, by fear of armed attack or of economic boycott by other States. The localisation of industry, and especially of heavy industry, is partly determined on strategic grounds. In Kiev, lying close to the Polish border, no new industrial establishments of any size have been established. The Urals, on the other hand, have been selected for an intense industrial development, not only because of the great natural wealth of this area, but because of its remoteness from all the frontiers. " If the

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice that the effect of rationing at fixed prices alongside of high prices and scarce supplies in the free market, is greatly to reduce the relative value of the higher money payments. To use the jargon of the economic text-books, present arrangements in the Soviet Union enforce a very rapid rate of decrease in the marginal utility of money. See also chapter on " The Russian Worker."

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Soviet Government loses both Moscow and Petrograd," said Lenin during the Civil War, "it will retire to the Urals." There are, moreover, internal, as well as external, strategical considerations. The creation of new industrial centres, especially in regions which hitherto have been without them, is the creation of proletarian garrisons in peasant lands. By this means, it is argued, the stubborn psychological division between town and country is weakened, and a multitude of remote villages is brought within reach of Communist urban influences.<sup>1</sup>

### IX

The combination of pride and strategic considerations is likewise responsible for the unprecedented speed and magnitude of the programme of industrialisation. And here we touch a most vital practical problem. "The fundamental and most stable feature of Russian history," says Trotsky in a notable passage,<sup>2</sup> "is the slow tempo of her development, with the economic backwardness, primitiveness of social forms and low level of culture resulting from it. The population of this gigantic and austere plain, open to eastern winds and Asiatic migrations, was condemned by nature itself to a long backwardness. . . . While the Western barbarians settled in the ruins of Roman culture, where many an old stone lay ready in building material, the Slavs in the East, found no such inheritance upon their desolate plain. The Western European peoples, soon finding their natural boundaries, created those economic and cultural clusters, the commercial cities. The population of the

<sup>1</sup> This idea, applied in its logical completeness, has led to the proposal to create, in place of towns and cities, industrial and cultural strips, stretching through the countryside along arterial roads : in other words, a deliberate policy of ribbon development. (See Mr. Ridley's chapter in this book, and an interesting account in the *Architectural Review*, May 1932.) But the practical difficulties of such an idea are obvious, and it is officially classified as a "Left-Deviation."

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. I., p. 23.

Eastern plain, at the first sign of crowding, would go deeper into the forest, or spread out over the steppe. . . . The 'lazy' mind of the Muscovites was a reflection of the slow tempo of economic development, the formlessness of class relations, the meagreness of inner history."

In the swift transition from the slowest to the fastest tempo in the world lie most of the immediate difficulties of the Soviet Planned Economy. The demand for trained skill of every kind, for skilled administrators and industrial organisers not less than for skilled mechanics, advances with terrific speed. It is hard to believe that the supply, in spite of every effort that is being put forth to increase it, can advance so rapidly. And the demand to-day is much in excess of the supply. The inevitable result is a widespread inefficiency, which is evident to every open-eyed visitor and is, indeed, frankly and fully admitted by the Soviet Press and the Soviet leaders. "In capitalist production," said Molotov,<sup>1</sup> "there is a general anarchy, but in each separate industrial establishment there is a plan. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, there is a general plan, but within many industrial establishments there is anarchy." This is a brave facing of the facts, and, in time, the situation may be transformed by the drive and enthusiasm, which likewise no open-eyed visitor to the Soviet Union can fail to recognise in abundant measure. But it is clear that, at the present moment and in the immediate future, the high tempo is a grave obstacle to solid achievement.

"You Russians," said an outspoken British tourist to a Russian acquaintance, "seem like children trying to run before you can walk." "Perhaps," he replied; "but, you see, we have no time to walk." He might have added that in the Capitalist West they seem to have given up trying, either to run or to walk, and to be lying helplessly on their backs, waiting for some miracle of salvation.

I returned from the Soviet Union strengthened in my belief that, for a community as for an individual, bold and conscious planning of life is better than weak passivity and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Izvestia*, February 12th, 1932.

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the tame acceptance of traditional disabilities, that trial and error is better than error without trial. In that most dramatic country I had seen a grim struggle for the mastery, a pull between the efficiency of Socialist principles and the inefficiency of their execution. Which will win the next round I would not wager. But the next round will not be the last, for history is long.

# FINANCE

by

**F. W. PETHICK-LAWRENCE**

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- I. Industrial Finance
- II. Prices, Currency and Exchange
- III. The Banking System
- IV. The Budget
- V. General conclusions





**M**Y PURPOSE in going to Russia was to follow up the study I had already made in England of the financial system of the U.S.S.R. In this I was fortunate in being able to have long personal interviews with many of the leading financial men in that country. Thus in Moscow I had the opportunity of talking, among others, to Grinko, the Finance Commissar (corresponding to our Chancellor of the Exchequer), to Arkus, Vice-President of Gosbank (the central bank of U.S.S.R., corresponding to the Bank of England), to Smilga, acting Head of Gosplan, which is the agency for drawing up the schemes for the Five Year Plans, and to Ossinsky, the Head of the Statistical Department. In Leningrad, Roslyakov, the principal financial officer, explained to me the financial system of the city and province which are under his particular control. All of these struck me as very able men, and they gave answers to my questions which were, in the main, full and satisfactory.

## I. INDUSTRIAL FINANCE

One of the first facts which impresses itself upon the foreign visitor is that money still forms the basis of the economic life of the U.S.S.R. in spite of the wholly different structure of its civilisation. Wages, purchases, transport charges, etc., are all conducted by exchange of currency. Not only so, but in the case of the factories, though they are in the hands of the State and are operated by the State, there is to-day strict accounting. Goods entering the factory as raw materials, machinery, etc., are charged to the factory at a definite price, and have to be paid for by the factory. The factory pays wages to its workpeople. It pays a percentage on wages for social insurance and also a definite turnover tax. It receives payment for goods delivered at a

price determined on certain bases. It produces a profit and loss account, and, if this shows a profit, that is divided up in certain proportions.

Sometimes the unit for some of these purposes is not the single factory, but a group of factories. But even then each factory, I understand, has to have its own strictly kept accounts, so that the precise position of it as a unit in the industrial machinery of the country can be appraised, and responsibility for success or failure rightly apportioned.

It follows from this that, when planning is going on for the future, the financial aspect is never lost sight of. However much the attention of the public and of the rank and file in the industry may be directed to the physical output, the factory managers, in consultation with the financial authorities of the country, are testing the estimate in terms of roubles. And when the plan comes to be put into operation the results measured in roubles will be carefully scrutinised to see how closely they conform to estimate.

In capitalist countries, industry is conducted with the assistance of two different kinds of financial backing. It requires long-term investment to provide its fixed capital. In a private firm the partners stake their own resources ; in a company the public subscribe for shares or debentures. If the industry is successful, it is the partners or shareholders who make money ; if it is not, it is they who lose it. Distinct from this there is short-term credit which should only be available when there is a reasonable prospect that it will be repaid at an early date. In this country such credit is usually supplied by the joint stock banks.

In U.S.S.R. there are no private resources available for investment in industry. Accordingly, when the plan necessitates the formation of a new factory, the money has to be found from public funds. The agency chosen for the purpose of this long-term financing is known as Prombank. By far the larger part of the money at the disposal of Prombank for investment in industry is derived from the budget ; but Prombank also holds available funds set aside by industry as depreciation, and in addition it has some

funds of its own made from its own profits. In the case of the development of factories already in existence, and for the installation of machinery, there are also often available some funds of the factories themselves derived from their own profits, much as is the case with company reserves in this country.

Prombank does not charge interest on the main funds it provides to industry (see, however, p. 46). They are to be regarded, therefore, not as loans, but as investments. I was given to understand that discussion had taken place on this point, but that it had been decided for the present to continue the course which is being pursued. The distinction may be expressed on the analogy of capitalist finance by saying that the State, which finds most of the money, is to be regarded as shareholder and not as debenture-holder. It does not, therefore, make a prior charge for interest as such. But it often imposes a turnover tax, and if there are profits it becomes theoretically entitled to them all. In practice it elects only to take a percentage<sup>1</sup> in the shape of profits tax.

In contradistinction to the long-term finance which is provided through Prombank, short-term credit is given by Gosbank itself, the central bank of the U.S.S.R. The authorities at Gosbank are very particular to see that the provision of short-term credit is not abused, and that it is not gradually converted into long-term advances or "frozen," as it is now often called in the capitalist world. Gosbank requires to be satisfied before granting these credits that the conditions of the plan are in fact being fulfilled; and, as it is the bank at which industry keeps its current accounts, it possesses the same kind of information as that which the joint stock banks have in this country with regard to the affairs of their clients.

Gosbank charges interest on its loans to industry. At the

<sup>1</sup> Nearly the whole of the profits of railways and communications go into the budget, but of other undertakings only about 22 per cent. on the average. Of the remainder a part goes to the workers in the industry and the rest goes to reserve.

time I visited the bank the following rates prevailed : 5 per cent. on enterprises for export, and 7 per cent. and 8 per cent. on others.

## II. PRICES, CURRENCY AND EXCHANGE

Prices in the capitalist world are, as economists are never tired of reminding us, determined by the laws of supply and demand. It is true that Governmental interference and monopolistic conditions considerably modify their operation, but, though they work differently from the way in which they used to do, they still are the deciding factor in the situation. In U.S.S.R. it is otherwise. Governmental control is of so extensive a character that the domain of supply and demand is restricted almost to vanishing point. This will be appreciated by a consideration of the following facts.

(1) As all foreign trade is conducted either by the Government itself or by the co-operative society working in close connection with it, there are no competitive traders on the foreign market to bring rouble prices of international goods to the world level.

(2) As all large-scale industry inside the U.S.S.R. is conducted by the Government there is only one seller of its products. There is therefore no competition among sellers and, further, the Government can if it likes discriminate between buyers as to the prices it charges.

(3) As the Government factories and farms are the sole users of all machinery, except a few farm implements which go to individual or collective farms, there is practically only one buyer of machinery.

There is left for the operation of supply and demand the sale of agricultural products, the resale of second-hand goods and the disposal of the yield of petty industry. The first of these would be a considerable matter but for the fact that the Government by imposing very heavy taxation on the peasants succeeds in getting into its own hands

most of the food and raw materials which is produced privately or on Kolkhozi, as well as all that which grows on its own farms. The retail disposal of this produce is performed by the co-operatives. The peasants are left, however, to-day<sup>1</sup> with some of their produce for private sale, as any traveller can see for himself at the railway stations. This is subject, as in capitalist countries, to the "higgling of the market." Second-hand goods and the products of petty industry constitute the only other survivals of purely competitive trading.

The Government in U.S.S.R. has therefore, with these trifling exceptions, complete control of the price level. It need not take any account of the price level in the outside world, and, so long as it keeps supply short of the requirements of the public, it can be assured that, whatever price it charges within certain limits, the goods will be bought. On the other hand, in order to ensure that the necessities of life reach the poorest people, a complete system of rationing exists, and the scale of rations allowed to an individual varies with all sorts of factors. Of course there is no guarantee that a person will always be able to purchase the full amount to which he or she is nominally entitled on the ration. Failure may be due either to his own slender purse or to a shortage of supply. If it is the latter the queue will develop as it did in England during the war. But it must not be assumed that all the queues that are seen in U.S.S.R. are due to shortage of goods, for they also arise from shortage of distributive personnel.

The official exchange-value of the rouble is ten to a gold pound, or something under seven to the pound sterling as it was in July 1932. The rouble has a similar value in exchange for other foreign currencies. Behind the rouble is a backing of precious metals and foreign currency kept at Gosbank. Thus, on July 1st, 1932, there were, according to the official figures, banknotes issued for circulation amounting to 2,925 million roubles, and in addition 2,688 million roubles

<sup>1</sup> During the last few years, policy has varied considerably as to the amount of free market trade allowed to the peasants.

Government imposes a turnover tax ranging from 2 to 50 per cent. on production and trade (including co-operative and State trade). How substantial this is will be realised from the figures given on p. 47 showing the estimated budget for the year 1932. It will be seen that in that year it was proposed to raise by the turnover tax a sum of no less than 15,000 million roubles or 55 per cent. of the gross revenue. Prices are, then, fixed so that aggregate sales cover the whole of production, inclusive of this tax ; and if there is beyond this a profit then the State will also take a share of this profit. These provide the main financial means by which the Government diverts the energies of the people, from the production of goods which they might wish to consume, to the production of goods for capital development.

The other fact to be remembered is that in the U.S.S.R. there is no common open market in which any customer is able to buy freely what he or she requires. Goods are purchased in a great variety of ways. Thus most work-people are entitled to have daily (at a price) a meal at their factory, which of course has to purchase food and utensils for this purpose. "Closed co-operatives" exist for the workers in various groups of factories and other occupations, and each of these sells all or most of the articles solely to its own members. In other co-operative stores, sales are less restricted. Foreigners buy in special shops called Torgsin. There is also the "free" market for those who cannot buy in any of the above ways or who desire to supplement their other purchases.

It requires but very little consideration to see that there is no reason why the level of prices should be the same in these various cases. In fact they widely differ, and there is every reason to believe the difference is due to the conscious, deliberate policy of the Government.

## III. THE BANKING SYSTEM

[For some of the information in this chapter I am indebted to my colleague Mr. G. R. Mitchison, who has kindly supplied me with his notes on it.]

The principal banks in U.S.S.R. are Gosbank, Prombank, and the Bank of Foreign Trade. There are also savings banks, with about 60,000 branches in all, and co-operative banks and some others. At one time there was also an agricultural bank, but when I was in Russia (July 1932) this had been taken over by Gosbank ; and I was told a new system of agricultural credit was being devised which would ultimately be placed under Prombank.

Gosbank is the central bank of the country and corresponds, therefore, to the Bank of England here. It holds the gold reserve, issues the currency, and manages the loans. Unlike the Bank of England, it is the direct source of short-term credit, which it lends out to industry at interest. It is also responsible for the finance of foreign trade on the western frontiers of the U.S.S.R. It had at the time of my visit about 2,600 branches. Of its profits 50 per cent. go to the Government and 50 per cent. are retained to increase the capital of the bank. It carries out its work in eight departments, viz. foreign trade, internal trade, heavy industry, light industry, timber, agricultural produce, note issue, and transport.

Prombank is the bank through which long-term advances are made to industry and to building organisations. It will shortly also have charge of agricultural credit. The principal advances of Prombank are made to construct new industries, such, for instance, as Magnitogorsk. They are, then, non-returnable and non-interest-bearing. But Prombank goes carefully into the plan and has expert advice as to cost. It charges a commission of one per mille. It also expects factories to hand over to it annually an amount to represent depreciation. Russian writers sometimes refer to this as "amortisation." As distinct from the provision



of this initial capital, it also makes returnable and interest-bearing advances for small extensions and for machinery. These advances are for loans of intermediate length, and, in fixing the rate of interest, Prombank is guided by the Gosbank rate at the time.

The Bank for Foreign Trade exists to finance the foreign trade of the U.S.S.R. on its eastern borders.

#### IV. THE BUDGET

It will be remembered that U.S.S.R., as its name indicates, is a union of republics, and that these republics have within them subordinate local areas. Corresponding to these there are the budget of the U.S.S.R., the budgets of the republics, and the local budgets. For the year 1932 the estimates of expenditure for the U.S.S.R. amounted to 27,000 million roubles, for the aggregate of the republican budgets to over 2,000 million roubles, and for the aggregate of the local budgets to a little under 5,000 millions. There is, however, some overlapping between the different groups.<sup>1</sup>

Details of the estimates of revenue and expenditure of the U.S.S.R. budget are set out on p. 47, the figures given representing millions of roubles. The striking feature of both sides of the account is the large proportion taken up by the "national socialised economy." From it nearly 80 per cent. of the revenue is derived, and to it nearly 75 per cent. of the expenditure is devoted. These figures are not gross figures of the income and expenditure of State enterprise (like our "self-balancing" revenue and expenditure in the British budget) ; if they were, they would be very much greater. They represent, on the revenue side, mainly turnover tax and profits tax taken from State and co-operative industry and trade ; and, on the expenditure

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a budget is given made up by combining all these different budgets, but I have not reproduced that here.

# BUDGET OF THE U.S.S.R., 1932

(In millions of roubles)

<i>Revenue</i>		<i>Expenditure</i>	
(1) From socialised economy :		(1) Financing national economy :	
From profits, including		Industry and electrifi-	
railways	4,445	cation	9,431
Turnover tax	15,126	Agriculture	3,482
Various	2,303	Trade, supply and food	
		industries	2,966
		Railways	2,487
		Other	1,713
			20,079
(2) From individuals :		(2) Education	1,403
Agricultural tax	600	Other cultural services	154
Cultural and housing			
funds	800	(3) Army and Navy	1,557
Other taxes	740	(4) Administration	1,278
Loans	2,750	(5) Expenses on State loans	585
		(6) Local budgets	990
		(7) Reserve fund and Foreign	1,499
		Office funds	
(3) Other revenue	778	(8) Other expenses	840
			214
Grand Total	27,542	Grand Total	27,042

side, money deliberately expended in capital development of various kinds.

It is worth while, before proceeding with other items in the budget, to attempt to form some idea of what these vast sums mean. During the Great War at its height, our own country was devoting out of its budget some £2,000 millions a year to its prosecution. This would equal the R20,000 millions outlay from the budget of the U.S.S.R. to-day on capital development if the effective value of the war pound be taken as equal to that of ten roubles to-day.

Another comparison might be made with the total capital development of the whole British Empire (an area about equal to that of U.S.S.R.) in the years immediately preceding the war. We should probably be roughly correct in placing that annual growth, then, in the neighbourhood of £500 to £750 millions. Whether that was greater or less than the total development in U.S.S.R. to-day depends on whether one of those gold pre-war pounds had a purchasing power greater or less than some 30 to 40 of the roubles of to-day used in buying capital construction.<sup>1</sup>

Returning, after this digression, to the other items of the budget, it will be seen on the revenue side that loans to the Government account for nearly half of the remainder. These loans are widely advertised in the U.S.S.R. and pay a high rate of interest in roubles. Immense numbers of people subscribe to them, but I was told that the aggregate in the hands of any one individual<sup>2</sup> was small. The authorities seem to have no fear of creating through them a new capitalist class. There is an income tax and inheritance tax, but they are not shown separately in the budget figures as

<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, another point, viz. as to whether the estimate in U.S.S.R. has, in fact, been reached. Most probably there will turn out to be a short-fall, and, moreover, it is held by some that insufficient allowance is made for depreciation. Against this, however, is the fact that the budget is not the sole source of the funds spent on capital development, part of which are derived from their own profits.

<sup>2</sup> The number of subscribers to the fourth loan was given me as 40 millions, and the amount raised 3,000 million roubles.

their yield is comparatively small. The agricultural tax is inclusive of income tax paid by the peasantry.

With regard to expenditure, the items mostly explain themselves, but it is necessary to notice that the figure put down for education only represents a small part of the total expenditure upon it in the U.S.S.R., for a much larger contribution comes from the republican and local budgets which are responsible for primary and secondary education. The grand total is in the neighbourhood of 5,000 millions of roubles. Somewhat similar remarks apply to other cultural and health services, and it should also be noted that a large proportion of the expenditure on "social services" does not appear in the budget at all, being defrayed out of specialised funds, such as the Social Insurance Fund. This is perhaps the largest special fund, but there are others. If all these were to be considered and evaluated (which is impossible at present), the expenditure on social services of all kinds would be seen to be very considerable.

I have already mentioned that the aggregate of the local budgets amount to a little short of R5,000 millions. One of the most important of these is for the city and province of Leningrad, and through the courtesy of Mr. Roslyakov, the principal financial officer, I was able to gather the following detailed information with regard to the items of revenue and expenditure, which may be compared with the financial details of our local bodies in this country.

The Leningrad revenue comes in under seven main heads :

(1) There is a small income from licence duties imposed by the State but collected locally.

(2) An income is derived from power stations, water supply, slaughter houses, etc.

(3) Of every ten kopecks paid for tramway fares, six kopecks go to the Tramway Trust<sup>1</sup> and four kopecks to the local budget.

(4) Of the tax on local industrial turnover, the local

<sup>1</sup> Of course, these "trusts" are publicly, not privately, owned.

budget takes 1 per cent. if the industry is classed as of U.S.S.R. importance ; it takes 3 per cent. if it is classed as of republican importance, and 100 per cent. if it is of merely local importance.

(5) The local budget takes 50 per cent. of the income tax paid by persons in its locality.

(6) It takes 100 per cent. of the local agricultural tax, and this is used by the local soviet.

(7) It takes 12 per cent. of the profits of industries in the locality if they are ranked as of merely local importance, but it takes no part of the profits if they are reckoned as of U.S.S.R. or republican importance.

These percentages do not necessarily apply to other districts than that of Leningrad. Other districts may take higher percentages in order to enable them to pay their way. I was told that to arrive at these there have to be detailed discussions on the local budget between the local and State financiers. I can well believe it. Even so, I should imagine it was no easy task to reach agreement. Perhaps in the background they have some marvellous formulæ like those of our own Local Government Act to settle the issue !

The main items of expenditure are the following :

(1) Capital and running expenses of local industries.

(2) Staff and expenses of the farms when publicly owned.

(3) Municipal expenses.

(4) Housing. The local authority shares with the workman and the State the cost on the following basis : Out of R140 millions last year the State found R75 millions, the local authority R35 millions, and the local building society R30 millions. The building society recoups its outlay, without interest, over a period of years from the workman.

(5) Education. The local authority pays primary and secondary, but not university.

(6) Public health, including health resorts if local. Health insurance is provided by money from the U.S.S.R., but doctoring is administered by the locality.

(7) Pensions.

- (8) Invalid houses.
- (9) Road building in the city and provinces.
- (10) Soviet apparatus.
- (11) Activity on the initiative of the workers (rabbit breeding was one instance that was mentioned to me).

## V. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The financial structure of the U.S.S.R., which it has been the object of these pages to describe, has passed through many metamorphoses before reaching its present shape. It has to-day many features in common with those of capitalist countries. It has a monetary system which is everywhere in daily use. It employs cheques for transactions between different business organisations. It has a central bank of issue and special banks. It provides long-term advances and short-term credit for industry. It raises loans from the citizens for furthering the objects of the Government.

But in many of these things the superficial similarity of technique hides a very wide difference in essence. It must never be forgotten when thinking of the U.S.S.R. that the big hand of the State is behind nearly all the transactions. The "trusts" which run its industry are organs of the State, and the cheques which pass between them do not really alter ownership; they resemble the cheques that a man who owns a factory and a farm may draw in order to transfer money from one of his accounts to another to pay for articles supplied and to keep correct accounts for both his undertakings.

In the realm of prices and exchange the similarity with capitalist finance is thinnest of all, and rugged differences brought about by the real basis of the communist system are everywhere coming to the surface. Gone is the law of supply and demand. Gone are the common market and the single price. Gone is the general price level. Gone is any

real correspondence between exchange rates and purchasing-power parity. Instead, there is a system of price fixing and regulation of exchange which depends on the conscious, deliberate will of the Government.

Perhaps most remarkable of all is the method of raising capital for new and extended development. It used to be a favourite argument of defenders of the capitalist system that a Socialist State would spend all its income and save nothing. The exact reverse has taken place in the U.S.S.R. Under the Communist Government the people have been called on to make sacrifices of the present for the future on a scale undreamed of elsewhere. I have shown that the principal financial means by which this is accomplished to-day consists in the turnover tax, which has, of course, the effect of raising the price of consumers' goods.

The financial structure of the U.S.S.R. certainly seems to make up a logical self-consistent whole which works successfully and provides the necessary checks against inefficiency and waste. It is far too early, however, to say that it has reached its final form. For the plastic nature of the whole Soviet régime is one of its most notable and engaging characteristics. A rigid, unchanging system may provide stability ; it may in a sense be a sign of strength. But the power to change is one of the fundamental indications of life.

# POWER AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

by

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- I. Introduction
- II. Electrification
- III. Industry
- IV. Conclusion





## I. INTRODUCTION

THE OBJECT of my visit to Russia was to study the power and industrial developments in the U.S.S.R.—not only those already completed but also those which are planned during the next five years. As the date of the visit happened to coincide approximately with the completion of the first Five (or rather four) Year Plan<sup>1</sup> and the commencement of the Second Five Year Plan, it was an interesting moment to choose. The whole visit occupied a period of 5½ weeks, from July 2nd, when I left London, to August 8th, when I returned to London, and the total time actually spent in Russia was just over four weeks. During this period the following places were visited: Leningrad, Moscow, Nijni Novgorod, Kharkov, Rostov, Dneprostroy, Dniepropetrovsk and Kiev, excluding a number of other places through which I merely passed. In the course of the tour I made a careful inspection of power stations at Leningrad, Moscow, Dneprostroy and Kiev, having a total installed capacity of approximately 600,000 kw. I also made a detailed inspection of factories, mainly electrical factories, at Leningrad, Moscow, Kharkov, Rostov and Kiev employing between 70,000 and 80,000 workers. A large number of other factories were seen or inspected from outside only. Apart from the above, a great deal of high voltage and low voltage overhead line construction was seen in the course of the tour, and also a certain number of outdoor transforming stations. It must be stated here that although, as the result of considerable exertion, it was possible to see a great deal of the power developments in the U.S.S.R., it had been hoped to do so with less difficulty than was actually experienced. Despite the assurance

<sup>1</sup> The original Five Year Plan (*pyatiletka*) was to have been completed in 1933, but was speeded up to be completed in 1932.

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of Intourist that adequate facilities would be given, it was found, particularly in Leningrad and Moscow, that permission to visit power stations and certain factories was difficult to obtain. This appears to have been due partly to recent regulations issued by the Government and partly to a breakdown of the organisation, particularly in Moscow. The above resulted in much time and energy being wasted in trying to arrange visits, which time and energy should have been devoted to actual inspection work. Whereas it was fully appreciated that regulations restricting the number of tourists visiting power stations or factories may be very desirable and necessary from the point of view of the administration, it was unfortunate that the rigidity of the system prevented reasonable facilities being granted to properly accredited experts who had a serious purpose in view and who were not merely sightseers. I may say here that I am perfectly satisfied the difficulties were not due to any attempt to conceal defects—I saw quite enough to be sure of this—and found the Russians quite remarkably frank about all defects. It is, however, desirable to record the difficulties not merely because they affected my visit, but because they are to some extent typical of the sort of inefficiency the overcoming of which is one of the main problems which Russia has to deal with in the future in order to obtain the full benefit of the remarkable industrial development which is recorded later in this report. When access had been obtained to power stations, factories and to the heads of the various departments, I found the individuals in charge helpful, friendly and very enthusiastic. The trouble referred to above was, therefore, in no way due to difficulty with individuals, but is simply typical of the general lack of efficiency and organisation in Russia when compared to Western European standards. It is not, of course, sufficient merely to compare conditions in Russia with existing Western European industrial conditions, because such a comparison would certainly fail to give a proper idea of the actual achievements of the U.S.S.R. and the remarkable rate at which industrialisation is proceeding.

## II. ELECTRIFICATION

As is well known, Lenin laid very great stress on electrification—"Communism is Soviet Government plus electrification of the whole country." During the first *pyatiletka* electrification was the most important feature of the plan, and great progress was made. It is so refreshing to find a country where the importance of electrification is fully appreciated that I would hesitate to suggest its importance has been, or could have been, exaggerated in Russia, but at the same time certain other factors necessary to industrialisation, particularly transport and communication, were, and still are, so desperately in need of improvement that relative to these electrification may have been overstressed. To some extent I think this is now appreciated, and in the second *pyatiletka* the plan has a broader basis, although still, rightly, electrification is one of the most prominent features. The second *pyatiletka* includes much railway construction and a very big scheme of railway electrification as well as improvement and expansion of communications. The total mileage of line to be electrified by 1937 is over 12,000 miles—a colossal task. In track mileage this represents not far off half the total existing track mileage of Great Britain.

Improvements of transport and communication are so absolutely essential to successful industrialisation that these features of the second *pyatiletka* must at all costs be carried out; otherwise the supply of the enormously increased quantities of raw material required by the factories and the distribution of the manufactured products will become increasingly difficult.

As regards the actual achievements in electrification during the first *pyatiletka* and the developments in the second *pyatiletka* now about to be started, a study was made of these in the Leningrad, the Moscow, the Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus and the Kiev districts. The average rate of growth of load in the Leningrad and Moscow areas is of the order of 30 per cent. per annum, or about two or

three times as fast as the rate of growth in Great Britain before the economic crisis. (The rate of growth in Great Britain last year was about 4 per cent.) For all Russia the rate of growth is given as over 50 per cent. for 1930-1931, this including, of course, areas, unlike Leningrad and Moscow, where previously there was no consumption of electricity and where to-day large industries have been put into operation. It was impossible to check by personal observation figures for the whole of the U.S.S.R., but from actual observation, and from information obtained from various independent sources, the growth of load in the two big areas referred to above could be checked with some accuracy, and on the basis of this, and from a general knowledge of conditions, a figure of over 50 per cent. for the whole of the U.S.S.R. does not seem unreasonable. As will readily be appreciated, such a rate of growth of electrical consumption involves a tremendous increase of generating plant. For instance, in the Leningrad district the plant installed (excluding some about to be scrapped) totals 292,000 kw. In addition, plant is being installed, or is about to be installed, totalling a further 388,000 kw. In the Moscow district the total generating capacity of the district stations has been increased in the last five years or so from less than 200,000 kw. to about 500,000 kw. and large extensions are at present in hand. The Moscow network is being linked to the large peat-burning station Nigris, near Nijni Novgorod.

In both the Moscow and Leningrad areas peat is being extensively used as a fuel, though in the Leningrad district there is also a considerable amount of water power. The available supplies of peat in both areas are practically unlimited. Only a few years ago, when Lenin's policy of electrification was first being developed, the whole interest of the Russian people centred on the building of the hydro-electric station Volkovstroy, near Leningrad. This station has an installed capacity of 58,000 kw. To-day there is a hydro-electric station almost completed, which I visited in the Ukraine, of ten times this capacity.

Even with this remarkable rate of increase, most of the plant installed is used in winter right up to its full capacity, with little or none of the margin of reserve capacity which is considered necessary in other countries. Consequently, interruptions of supply are frequent (as happened two or three times even while I was in Russia), and the life of the Russian power station engineer must indeed be an anxious one. The rapid growth of load is due mainly to the industrial load. In Leningrad I found that the domestic load, mainly lighting, had risen very rapidly in the earlier years, but lately had not risen so fast. Very little domestic heating or cooking load is at present supplied. One particularly interesting feature of the U.S.S.R. electrification is the development of central heating from the exhaust steam of the power station turbines. This is being done in Leningrad, Moscow and elsewhere on a very large scale, and involves an extensive network of steam or hot-water pipes throughout the cities. A considerable number of such very large non-condensing power stations are at present under construction.

In the Ukraine the electrical developments are associated firstly with the enormous hydro-electric station on the Dnieper, Dneprostroy, which incidentally has the most important result of making the river navigable over the whole of its length, and secondly with several large coal-burning stations in the Donbass area, of which the largest are Steravka and Zuevka. Dneprostroy has a present installed capacity of about 300,000 kw. (shortly to be increased to over 550,000 kw.), and the other stations about 375,000 kw. The former is to supply mainly the new factories built in the locality and the factories at Dnepropetrovsk, while the latter are to supply mainly the coal-mining area of the Donbass, where the mines are being electrified and electric coal-cutting is about to be extensively used. The Dneprostroy scheme, which included the building of the dam and power station, the construction of local factories, the making of the river navigable, and the development of irrigation, is an interesting example of the result of central planning.

During the course of an aeroplane flight over the Donbass area it was possible to get a general idea of the extent of this mining and industrial region, and of the new developments which have been, or are being, carried out. Both at Dnieprostroy and in the Donbass the power station construction seems, for the moment, to have outrun the available load, and, unlike the position in most other districts, the plant is not yet fully loaded. For instance, pending the completion of the principal factories at Dnieprostroy the load was only about 20,000 kw. out of a possible total load of nearly 300,000 kw. The same is true to some extent of the Donbass area, where coal production has not yet reached the planned figure. All the power stations in the Ukraine are to be tied together by an extensive high voltage network which is as yet only partly completed, and it is specially important to complete the connection of Dnieprostroy to the steam stations, since these, acting as peak load stations to the base load water power, will enable full use to be made of all the available water power. The completed part of the network is mainly 161 kv., 110 kv. and lower voltage, but shortly some of the principal stations will be linked by 220 kv. lines.

In the Northern Caucasus district there is a considerable amount of water power available, and a number of large and medium-sized stations have already been built, or are in the course of construction. Use is also being made of natural gas. Particularly in this district is railway electrification to be developed during the next five years. The Northern Caucasus district will be connected to the Ukraine by 220 kv. lines not yet constructed, and it is also proposed to use 380 or 400 kv. main interconnecting lines if experiments now being carried out are successful. Similar experiments are also being carried out on 220 kv. oil-filled cable. At the present time the principal power station near Rostov, the capital of Northern Caucasus, is Artem (66,000 kw. installed, shortly to be 95,000 kw.). There is also a small local power station for the huge agricultural machinery factory in Rostov. A considerable 110 kv. network already

exists in the area, and will link Rostov to the oil-gas power station at Krasnodar, which station, like most of the existing stations, is being extended, and will have an ultimate capacity of 135,000 kw. The building of a new station at Nestvetay, near Rostov, has just been started, and most of the immense electrical development is still in process of construction, or about to be started. The two largest stations, the construction of which forms part of the Second Five Year Plan for this area, are a steam station to the north of Rostov of 400,000 kw. and a hydro station at Sulak, near the Caspian Sea, of 350,000 kw. Although the area is as yet relatively undeveloped electrically, the programme for the next five years seems, even for the U.S.S.R., to be exceptionally ambitious.

The Kiev district is less industrial than those already mentioned. The city of Kiev is at present supplied from two comparatively small stations, one an old station with a capacity of 15,000 kw. and the other a new station of 21,000 kw. installed. These two stations feed into an 11 kv. network for the city supply, but are not as yet linked to any other stations in the area. Both the new and the old stations burn a certain amount of peat, but the new station is designed to burn either coal, oil or peat. At present during the winter both stations are overloaded, and in fact I learnt from the chief engineer that the load has at times to be restricted. The new station is to be extended next year, and during the next five years an extensive high-voltage network is to be constructed linking up the existing and various new peat- or coal-burning regional stations, giving a total generating capacity for the district of 420,000 kw. in 1937, excluding certain local stations. A considerable amount of suburban railway electrification is also planned. The existing new station, Kres, was Russian designed, and contains an 11,000 kw. Russian-built turbo alternator, together with a 10,000 kw. turbo alternator of foreign manufacture. The station is of interest because it is representative of modern Russian design, and on the whole it can be considered to be a reasonably well designed and



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constructed station. Considerable trouble is being experienced due to lack of good firebrick for the furnace walls. This trouble is, I believe, widespread in Russia, and an improvement in the quality and quantity of the output of firebrick is very necessary.

The districts referred to above are only a few of a total of some thirty electrical districts for all the U.S.S.R. In order to give some idea of the present and planned growth of electrical consumption for all the U.S.S.R., the following figures are of interest :

<i>Year</i>	<i>Installed Generator Capacity</i>	<i>Output</i>
1930	2,900,000 kw.	7,000 million kwh.
1931	4,050,000 kw.	11,000 million kwh.
1932 (estimated)	5,517,000 kw.	17,000 million kwh.
1937 (planned)	22,500,000 kw.	100,000 million kwh.

*Note :* The output in Great Britain for 1931 was about 13,000 million units, excluding the amount privately generated. The estimated total figure can be taken as about 17,000 million units, and as the rate of increase 1931-1932 is certainly very slight, the position at the end of this year will be that the consumptions of electricity in Great Britain and in Russia are about equal. The total generator capacity installed in Great Britain is much greater than the Russian figure, and the "utilisation" factor is correspondingly lower.

The figures for 1932 give the remarkably high average "utilisation" factor of about 35 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The planned consumption for 1937, if realised, will mean an increase over 1932 of about 500 per cent., and will also mean an increase in the already high average "utilisation" factor. Assuming a geometric increase on the basis of the 1930-1932 figures, the planned figure will be reached, but this, of course, necessarily depends on the success of the general industrial plan, the difficulties in the way of which are referred to later. Apart from the big developments already described there are large

<sup>1</sup> As a large amount of generating plant only came into commission during 1932, the real "utilisation" factor is greater than 35 per cent.

blocks of new power being used at such places at Magnitogorsk (100,000 kw.), and when the Volgastroy scheme for 2,000,000 kw. of water power is completed it will entirely dwarf any developments carried out up to the present. It is satisfactory to find that the U.S.S.R. has adopted 50 cycles as a standard generation frequency, this being the same as in Great Britain.

As regards consumption, it is difficult to obtain accurate figures of the consumption per head of population because of uncertainty as to the actual population in most of the cities or districts. In the industrial areas the growth of the urban population is terrific. Such figures as can be calculated from the available population statistics show a consumption per head in the Leningrad district of 381 units. The Moscow figure is probably of the same order, and in Kiev the figure is 230 units. For all U.S.S.R., which of course includes the vast undeveloped areas of Asiatic Russia, the consumption is of the order of 100 units per head. These figures compare with about 375 units per head in Great Britain in 1931. If the second *pyatiletka* is carried out according to plan, the consumption per head of population for all the U.S.S.R. will be at least 500 units in 1937, even after allowing for growth of population. It is of interest to compare this figure with that of 500 units per head in 1940 for Great Britain, which was the estimate on which the Weir Report, leading to the construction of the British "Grid," was based.

Before passing to the industrial section of this report it is worth drawing attention to the fact that as yet not much has been done in Russia regarding the use of electricity in agriculture. Many of the agricultural villages in the Moscow area receive lighting supplies from the usual pole-mounted transformers connected to medium voltage lines, but neither in Moscow nor elsewhere did I see any evidence of the use of electricity for the various agricultural processes. In this respect, despite the enormous importance of agriculture in Russia, she is behind other European countries. I imagine this is due not only to the concentration of attention on the

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industrialisation of Russia, but also to the general difficulty in educating the agricultural population to the use of machinery of any sort.

### III. INDUSTRY

Practically the whole of industry in the U.S.S.R. is State enterprise in one form or another. The only exceptions to this are a few very small local industries, but these exceptions are quite insignificant. The direction of industry (excluding such services as transport and communication and excluding agriculture) is in the hands of two bodies, namely the Supreme Council of National Economy (Commissariat of Industry) and the Commissariat for Supply (Food Production). The whole of industry is controlled ultimately by these two bodies, but the industries of national importance are more directly under their control, whereas the local industries are only under general control, the detailed control being through the similar commissariats of the autonomous republics. Associated with the Supreme Council of National Economy and the Commissariat for Food Supply is the State Planning Department, which plays an exceedingly important part in planning the future development of industry and in settling the production output from year to year. It is at Gosplan that the Five Years Plans are prepared. The actual procedure is as follows :

Gosplan prepares certain preliminary figures for the output during the next year after consultation with the commissariats and the subsidiary planning departments. These preliminary figures are then transmitted through the commissariats to the authorities controlling the individual industries, and from them to each of the factories. The figures are then considered in detail, and this includes consultation with the workers themselves. The revised figures are then retransmitted back to Gosplan, where they are further considered, and then published in final form, after which they are binding instructions to all industries.

Although central control and general planning for industry is obtained in the manner described above, the actual operation of industry is carried out independently by a large variety of corporations, trusts, combines, companies, co-operative societies and other bodies. All these are intended to operate on a strictly commercial basis, although they are set up in the first instance by the central national authorities under charter. A fixed percentage of the profits of national industries is paid into the national budget, and similarly the local industries pay a fixed percentage of profits into the budgets of the respective republics.

The capital of the corporations, trusts, etc., responsible for the actual operation of industry consists of land, buildings, equipment, etc., handed over to these bodies under the original charter. This capital cannot be sold or transferred. The various bodies enter into contracts with each other for the supply or acceptance of manufactured goods. Such contracts are legally binding, and are subject to the usual commercial penalties for non-fulfilment. Each body is individually responsible for its own debts. In general the corporations, trusts, etc., control complete industries, although in a number of instances they control only regional industries. They appear to have considerable freedom in the disposal and sale of their products to each other, although this is subject to a certain amount of general control by the central authorities. It is claimed that this general control will definitely prevent any future possibility of over-production, leading to the usual cycles of trade depression and boom. Of course, at the present time there is no question of over-production, the great difficulty being to bring production in line with the most urgent demand. The problem of unemployment as known to the whole of the rest of the world does not exist in the U.S.S.R. at the present time, and with such complete control of the means of production it is to be doubted if the problem will ever arise.

Prices are settled by the central authorities in conjunction

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with the corporations and other executive bodies, the prices being generally based on the actual cost of production. They are necessarily based on forecasts of cost of production, and any economies which may be effected, or which may result from improved technique, are available for disposal by the individual enterprises or factories, and are used for improvement of equipment or for improvement of the conditions of work or the living conditions of the workers.

As regards ordinary working capital, all the executive bodies and the component factories can obtain credit from the State Bank, but this is regulated by the extent to which the enterprises are fulfilling the planned figures of production. Each factory has a single manager or director, appointed by the corporation or trust, etc., who is the sole executive authority. There are, however, in each factory a trade union local branch and a Communist Party "cell," the latter representing all the workers who are members of the Communist Party, and these bodies consult with the manager with regard to the conditions of work, and particularly the output of the factory, though in theory at least they do not interfere with his executive authority. Thus the party "cell" and the trade union local branch have the primary function of stimulating output by making known to each individual worker what output figures are expected and generally encouraging production by suggesting improvements and rationalisation. They also consider inventions and suggestions proposed by individual workers. The party "cell" and the trade union organisation have subsidiary branches in each shop of each factory. It might also be mentioned here that one of the important means of stimulating production is through the "shock" brigades. These are associations of workers who have pledged themselves to set an example in rate of output and efficiency of work.

As already stated, most of the factories visited were connected with the electrical industry. Some of these were old factories which have been enlarged and equipped with

modern machines ; others were entirely new. In most of the factories modern mass production methods had been applied to a greater or lesser extent. In the category of old factories which have been modernised, and which I visited, were the telephone factory at Leningrad, the electric lamp and transformer factory at Moscow and the electrical machinery factory at Kharkov. In the category of new factories visited were the cable factory at Moscow and the agricultural factory at Rostov. These are probably fairly representative of the present position. As regards equipment, there is little to complain of in these factories. A great deal of the machinery is very up to date and very costly. The general layout—lighting, ventilation, etc.—is naturally much better in the new than in the old factories, but even in the latter it is not bad. The conditions under which the employees work are on the whole good, and all manner of means to stimulate output are employed—loud speakers, placards, banners, flowers, competitions, exhibitions of defective work, lectures, wall newspapers and pictures. One's first impression was of Christmas Day in the workhouse, but further investigation soon showed that care for the workers' welfare went much further. Canteens, special diet dining-rooms, rest-rooms, clubs, medical attention, educational facilities and holidays on full pay—to mention only a few—were features of practically every factory visited. The workers seemed, on the whole, happy and contented, and in some instances individual shops had the appearance of a large family party. This is not always conducive to high efficiency of production. As already mentioned, unemployment, such as is now being experienced throughout the whole of the rest of the world, is unknown in Russia. There appears to be an actual shortage of labour in most Russian industries, and in this connection a very serious difficulty has arisen, the overcoming of which is a matter of grave concern at the present time. This difficulty is due to the fluidity of labour. A manager in one factory will improve conditions of work, or possibly even raise wages, thus attracting labour to his

*particular factory. Another factory does the same or better, and labour moves to this factory, and so on. Naturally the result is a tremendous wastage of time and much disorganisation. Many workers never stay long enough in one factory to acquire any degree of skill. The steps being taken at the present time by the State may greatly improve the position in the near future ; but the problem is at present very acute.*

Anyone visiting a Russian factory will be struck immediately by two facts : first, that a very large proportion of *all* the work is done by women, and frequently done as well or better than by men ; and second, that all the large factories work day and night in three shifts of eight hours. The former fact is merely one example of the tremendous part which women play in the whole activity of the State in the U.S.S.R. There are many instances to be found where the wife is earning as much or more than the husband, and naturally this goes a long way towards real equality of the sexes. It is not intended to digress on to such topics, but it is worth noting that the whole atmosphere, not only in the factories, but all through Russian life, seems to result in more natural and more equal relationship between men and women than in most other countries. The latter fact—the working of three shifts—is very forcibly brought home to any visitor to the U.S.S.R. by the way in which traffic in all the large cities continues day and night. Trams run all night, and this is not always conducive to sleep in hotels which happen to be on tram routes. One effect of universal three-shift working is of course to give a high-load factor for all machinery, and this goes some way towards balancing the much lower efficiency of the Russian worker as compared with the more highly trained workers of other countries. During each shift there is about an hour for meals. The usual arrangement is for each shift to be divided into sections, which have their meals at different hours. There are, no doubt, certain practical advantages in this, as, for instance, in the serving of meals in the factory canteens, but, as a result, whatever time one

enters a factory one almost always finds some of the workers away for meals, and, except perhaps in some of the very modern mass production factories, where continuity of process is essential, it is open to question whether or not this results in less interruption of work than a complete stoppage of work for a definite meal hour for the whole factory. A five-day week—four days' work and one day's holiday—was originally adopted throughout the U.S.S.R., but after a trial this was not found to be successful, and now a six-day week has been adopted almost universally.

In all the factories visited I made a special effort to gauge the quality of the work turned out. I was best able to do this in the electrical factories, and my general conclusion was that especially in those factories where the processes are less highly mechanical, and require an appreciable degree of individual skill, the quality of the output is much inferior to that in similar factories in other countries, particularly in Great Britain. There were, however, many instances where the inferiority in quality was mainly in the finish of the machine or article, and where the product was reasonably robust and serviceable even if much of the finish expected in this country had been omitted. Still, quality of production is undoubtedly relatively low, and this is associated with the one vital problem of the whole industrialisation of the U.S.S.R.—*the shortage of skilled workers*. In every factory without exception which I visited, I was told, and could see without being told, that there was a shortage of skilled workers. By skilled workers I mean not only skilled manual workers, but also engineers, experts of all kinds, and administrative staff. To some extent it would seem, from the remarkably high figures of workers employed, that an attempt has been made to get over the difficulty by merely employing more people, and this may be partly the reason why there is now a shortage also of unskilled workers. The employment of an excessive number of unskilled workers is, of course, no real solution of the difficulty, and may even make matters worse. The shortage of skilled workers is so acute that I can only say it is amazing



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the factories work as well as they do. To a large extent this can be attributed to the almost universal enthusiasm and keenness of all the younger workers. The early history of nearly all the large new factories which have been built is interesting. The factories in most cases are built by, or with the help of, foreign engineers. Then they are turned over to the Russians, who try to commence output. A period of some six months, or in the case of the largest factories perhaps a year, follows when conditions are quite chaotic, and little or no output results. Then, as the result of great exertion and because of the enthusiasm of the workers, matters improve and output reaches a reasonable level, even if not up to the designed output. "Shock brigades" of party workers are often instrumental in pulling factories through their teething troubles, and so long as the processes are those of mass production, demanding only a moderate degree of skill for strictly limited operation, experience has shown that it is possible in the U.S.S.R. to train to this extent in a period of six months or a year even the ex-peasant workers who have come straight from the land to the factories. The automobile factory Autostroy at Nijni Novgorod is at present going through this teething period, but there are many instances of other big new factories which have successfully passed beyond it. Autostroy, being particularly large, is likely to take longer than the average ; but, on the other hand, very special steps have been taken to deal with the situation here. For instance, alongside the main factory special training shops, equipped with specimens of each type of machine in the main factory, have been erected, and large numbers of workers are at present being trained.

As is well known, the policy of paying all workers according to their needs rather than their ability was abandoned some time ago, and now the skilled worker can command very high wages. This is a most important change, and is an example of the readiness of the U.S.S.R. to admit and rectify features of the system which prove failures. The average wage of the unskilled worker may be about

100 roubles a month, but the highly skilled worker may easily get 600 or 700 roubles a month. This change of policy no doubt greatly stimulates both the supply and the efficiency of skilled workers, but still the shortage is acute. Although the ratio of skilled to unskilled wage-rates is high, this is very considerably scaled down in practice because the purchasing power of the wage rapidly diminishes as the wage increases. (See also chapter on "The Russian Worker.")

The future of the industrialisation of Russia lies mainly in this problem of the supply of skilled workers and in the improvement of the general efficiency of organisation, but there is another aspect to the problem which must be fully appreciated in order to understand the present position. Never have I met such an intense desire for education and training as is to be found particularly amongst the younger generation in the U.S.S.R. If this spirit is maintained, it can only be a question of time—possibly a considerable time, but still quite a measurable time—before the present difficulties are overcome. There is no reason to think that the present enthusiasm will diminish, and the State is doing its utmost to provide the facilities for training and education. Nearly every large factory has its factory school. There are evening classes, technical institutes, and facilities of all kinds for education and training. Of course, the supply of teachers is the difficult problem, and the standard of teaching is at present undoubtedly low. The number of students of all kinds is, on the other hand, enormous. The problem resolves itself into a race between the construction of industrial works and the training of the people. Because it is easier to make things than people, it is likely that for at least a generation to come the supply of trained workers is going to lag behind the requirements, and it may take nearer two generations before the general standard of education is level with that of other industrialised nations. Nevertheless, anyone who has actually experienced the enthusiasm of the younger generation in the U.S.S.R. must almost inevitably feel

that the present problems will ultimately be solved. It will greatly assist the process if various good features of the industrial system of other countries, which have been abandoned in the violent swing away from capitalism, are re-admitted into the social structure, as I myself believe will happen in the course of the next few years in the U.S.S.R. For instance, it is essential to have more individual responsibility, less bureaucratic methods, more devolution, and in general more scope for individual initiative. These are matters which are not necessarily inconsistent with Socialism, or even with Communism, and, as the recognition of the necessity for such changes has already proceeded some distance, I do not think it is to be doubted that the process will continue. There is, of course, the obvious corollary that capitalist countries must incorporate into their economic and social structures those features of the Russian system which are being proved successful. One of the most important of these is State planning. If the Russian experiment were to prove nothing else, it at least has shown what can be done when the State plans and intelligently controls its own development on a completely unified basis. One can scarcely picture what would be the result of the combination of State planning and control such as in the U.S.S.R. when combined with the higher level of education and efficiency in this country. Progress would certainly be accelerated to an almost unbelievable extent, and no longer would private or local interests be able to block or hamper schemes of economic or social improvement. The value of State planning is perhaps one of the most important lessons to be learnt from the U.S.S.R., but there are many other features of the Russian system which we can well afford to study.

In the meantime, Russia has to pass through a prolonged stage of acute shortage of skilled labour. Now it will be possible, as has already been shown by actual experience, to carry on the industrialisation process at a rapid rate so long as the processes involved are mainly of the semi-skilled mass production type. It is, however, impossible to avoid

the necessity for much highly skilled work. For instance, the manufacture of mass production machinery cannot itself be semi-skilled mass production work. For all work of this type the U.S.S.R. is dependent, and will continue even more so in the future to be dependent, on foreign help and on imports from abroad. Nominally the U.S.S.R. should be nearly independent of imported machinery and other equipment by the end of the second *pyatiletka*, but I am quite satisfied from personal observation that this will not be the case. In fact, I believe that the volume of imports will grow rapidly, provided only that the necessary corresponding exports of raw material—timber, oil, minerals, etc.—are not restricted in foreign countries by tariffs or other means. It is not only that Russia cannot in the near future supply her requirements of various types of equipment demanding highly skilled manufacture, but as her industrial policy develops there is going to arise in Russia a demand by her 160 million inhabitants for manufactured goods of all kinds, such as perhaps has never before been known in the history of the world. Russia has boundless mineral, oil and timber resources. These are things the outside world requires. In return she can offer a market for manufactured goods the saturation of which, even assuming complete success of present industrial expansion, is too far off even to be estimated. Perhaps there is no saturation point. The importance of these facts in relation to the present economic world crisis can scarcely be overstated.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The First Five Year Plan of electrification has undoubtedly been fully, or more than fully, achieved. Mistakes have been made, and the cost of the work has in some instances undoubtedly been excessive. Some of the mistakes might have been avoided by making greater use of foreign experience and foreign help, but nevertheless the policy of electrification has been a quite undoubted success.

## 74 POWER AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

In industry the Plan has probably been only partially carried out, and there are gaps where only a very limited success has been achieved. In particular, the production per worker has not increased as had been expected. The weaknesses of the industrial system as it stands at present are :

- (a) Acute shortage of skilled workers.
- (b) Want of efficient organisation.
- (c) Defective transport and communication ; and
- (d) Insufficient scope for individual initiative and responsibility.

For reasons already given, all these defects are very likely to be cured in course of time, but the training of skilled workers is going to be a lengthy business, and it may become in the next year or two even more acute than at present. Russia has a goal before her towards which she is moving on a tremendous wave of enthusiasm, and to reach which she has made, and is, I think, still prepared to make, great sacrifices. The insuperable barriers to progress, both material and spiritual, of the old régime have been cleared away. Much that is good in the older systems of the outside world will probably in course of time be absorbed, perhaps in a modified form, into the Russian system, and it is essential that those features of the Russian system which are proving their value be incorporated into the systems of other countries. One of the most important of these is State Planning.

# THE RUSSIAN WORKER

by

G. R. MITCHISON

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The Five Year Plan—Population and Employment—Fluidity of Labour—The Factory as a Social Unit—The Factory : Management and Working Conditions—Trade Unions and Collective Agreements—The Place of the Communist Party—Hours and Holidays—Social Insurance—Wages—The Worker's Budget—The Open Market—Planned Prices—Co-operative Organisation—Housing and Rents—Co-operative Housing and Building—Conclusion.



## THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

**T**HE FIVE YEAR PLAN came into operation in October 1928. Although it is a plan for the development of the whole of Russia, the development takes the form of industrialisation. In 1928 Russia had recovered from the immediate effects of war, of foreign intervention and of the complete dislocation over a period of years of her industry at home and of her trade with foreign countries. But she had done little more than recover ; she was still an agricultural country, dependent on foreign imports of manufactured goods and unable, merely on the products of her agriculture, to effect any substantial improvement in the standard of life of her people. The object of the Five Year Plan—the First Five Year Plan—was not to effect an immediate improvement on a small scale, but to lay the foundations of a large-scale improvement. Those foundations were to be laid by the provision of electric power for industrial development and by the establishment of large-scale industry. With the commencement, at the end of this year (1932), of the Second Five Year Plan, Russia, while continuing the development of power and of heavy industry, will turn her attention for the first time to the increased production of manufactured goods, and the application of the results of the First Five Year Plan to the direct improvement of the worker's standard of life.

## POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

One form of industrialisation in Russia has been the setting up of new centres of industry, usually dependent on the development of some neighbouring source of mineral wealth or power supply. Another form has been the rapid



and comprehensive expansion of existing industrial centres. In rough figures the population of Moscow in 1926 was 2 millions, and in 1931  $2\frac{3}{4}$  millions. Leningrad had rather over  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million inhabitants in 1926 and just under  $2\frac{1}{4}$  millions in 1931. The actual percentage increases are 37.3 per cent. and 38.1 per cent. In both cases the population at present must be considerably more than the 1931 figure. It is interesting to notice that, though the increase in Moscow may be partly due to Moscow being the seat of government, the increase in Leningrad seems to be nothing but the result of a big move out of the country into the town, connected with industrial development. Such a movement has certain obvious effects. In the first place it affects housing. You cannot, in the space of five years, increase the population of a large town by 37 or 38 per cent. without making the question of where your new arrivals are to live a very acute one, especially when housing conditions were extremely bad to start with. In the second place, though you can draw labour from the country, you cannot expect to get from country sources any proportion of skilled labour. Lastly, the question arises : Does not this move into the towns represent people looking for a job, who will not necessarily find one ?

The last question is easily answered. There is, on a smaller scale, a constant move into towns in capitalist countries : in such countries the move only aggravates unemployment in the towns. There is no unemployment at all in Russia at present. There was unemployment at the beginning of the Five Year Plan and, though it was hoped to better matters, it was not expected that unemployment would be eradicated. It has been completely eradicated.

From the worker's point of view the move into the towns is not the move of people seeking a job, but the move of people knowing that they will get a job and attracted to it by conditions in the towns. No unemployment benefit is paid under the social insurance scheme in Russia, because there is no unemployment. Every factory I visited could have employed more unskilled labour, as well as more

skilled labour. At one factory in Kharkov, work had been reduced from three shifts to two shifts, not (as would be the case in a capitalist country) because the factory could not sell its goods, but because the factory could not get enough unskilled workers, an additional reason for the shortage in that case being that new factories had been set up on an extensive scale in and around Kharkov.

## FLUIDITY OF LABOUR

One result of there being a job for everyone was, at first, that workers took to moving too rapidly from one job to another. The Russian is a quick-change artist in his movements as well as in his ideas. The institutions of Russia are changed with a refreshing, but somewhat bewildering, rapidity. If one form of organisation does not work, it disappears without more ado. If a new Ministry is required, it is set up at once. If a factory does not work, it will find itself reorganised on entirely different lines and with entirely different new management. It is hard for a foreign observer to say how far this nimbleness of motion is a matter of being a Russian, and how far it is the result of having a plan and making it work. But, for one reason or another, it is certainly a characteristic of the individual worker. There are stories of populations moving in the night, many of them wild tales or obviously exaggerated, as one would expect such stories to be—"Russian scandal," no doubt, to some extent—but to quit your job *en masse* may serve as an effective strike, in a country where there is no organisation for a strike as we know it. And, apart from any such mass movements, there is no reasonable doubt that the constant moves of individual workers from one job to another were a real difficulty three or four years ago. The difficulty seems to have been overcome in substance, though the "fluidity of labour" is still a serious matter. At a cotton-mill in Moscow about 3 per cent. of the workers (say, 200 out of 6,000) leave every month, while at Kharkov the rate of change

was much smaller—about 40 out of 4,000 every month. The difficulty has been met, I think, partly by a general levelling up of factory conditions—so that there is not so much reason now to leave one factory for another—partly by persuading the worker that it is the wrong thing to do to leave his job : for instance, if he goes on hopping from one place to another, you mark his trade-union card with a little picture of a grasshopper. That is just one instance of why, as I see it, the Russian experiment stands no chance of failing. The leaders of Russia have succeeded in mobilising and using what may be variously called “proletarian feeling,” “the Public School spirit” or “public opinion.” This and other plans in Russia will succeed, because on the whole the Russians want them.

#### THE FACTORY AS A SOCIAL UNIT

What does the factory represent in Russia ? So far as the towns—or at any rate the larger towns—are concerned the factory is intended to be nothing less than the unit of social and economic life. This is not surprising : for the Russians look to shape their political institutions in economic units. A factory in England may, or may not, have amenities : but in Russia the amenities are not an adjunct to the factory, not a mere means of contenting the workers ; they are part of its function as a unit of social life. It is therefore natural that a very large part of the new housing so necessary in Moscow and elsewhere, as well as in new industrial centres, takes the form of factory housing—the building by factories of large blocks of flats for their workers. As regards housing, the only serious competitor to the factories is the co-operative housing system, to which I will refer below. For purposes of comparison, it is interesting to notice that in Vienna—a socialist city in a capitalist State, where the housing question has been attacked on a scale comparable to the Russian—housing is a municipal affair : the reason

for the difference in Russia is clearly the Russian (or Marxist) view of the functions of an economic unit.

A Russian factory attends, then, not only to the housing of its workers, but to their social life. It therefore has a club and a library within its walls. The club is perhaps a "Lenin's corner," with a bust of Lenin swathed in red cotton in a prominent place ; it may also have a large room for lectures or meetings, and arrangements for showing cinema films. The library has an astonishingly large collection of small books, including some economic and technical literature as well as periodicals and so on. If the factory is a small one, the club and the library may not be very elaborate affairs, or there may be no room for such things inside the factory. In such a case the factory sees to it that its workers have a club and a library near by : there is, perhaps, some pooling arrangement with other neighbouring works.

The factory is the first-aid station for the workers' health, and not merely as regards accidents or surgical matters. In every factory I found a well equipped dispensary, with doctors in charge. The exact amount of equipment and personnel varies, and perhaps some instances may be interesting. In a cotton-mill in Leningrad, with 3,000 workers, the medical arrangements were in charge of two doctors, one of whom was a woman ; the dispensary was very well equipped ; there were elaborate arrangements for electric treatment, and there was a well furnished room for dentistry. In a larger cotton-mill in Moscow, with 6,000 hands, the dispensary was not quite so well equipped, but the medical staff of the factory consisted of five doctors, four nurses and two sanitary maids. Both those mills were pre-war factories, and in both cases, especially in Leningrad, there had been considerable expansion of any previous arrangements for medical treatment at the factory. Very careful records were kept of prevalent illnesses, and in both cases the doctors in charge claimed that the health of the workers was improving.

One result of the extensive employment of women in  
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Russia is that the factories must provide for the children of their women workers. In or near a factory of any size there is a crèche for children under four years of age, and there are factory arrangements for a kindergarten in a residential part of the town or in the country. I mention those amenities in order to complete the picture of factory life. They are described in the chapter on "Women and Children" in this volume, which deals also with the leave given to women workers for childbirth.

As regards education and amusement, in addition to what I have already described, the factory worker has resources in the town. There are parks of culture and rest, including all kinds of recreation and places for the children to stay and be looked after. There are, in some districts where workers live, workers' theatres and clubs, which do not seem to be attached to any particular factory. Workers have special rates of admission to public cinemas and theatres. But all those more public arrangements lie somewhat outside the scope of this paper. There is, however, one aspect of the factory which ought to be mentioned, before I come to questions of management, hours and wages. Factories, as such, provide opportunities for education. These differ in different factories, but one may expect to find classes for the technical education of workers in the evenings. In the Moscow cotton-mill which I have already mentioned (6,000 hands) there were three types of school: a trade school for about 500 workers, a school (rather more advanced) for about 200 technicians, and an advanced school for 50 engineers and technicians. The proportion of educational accommodation to the total number in the factory seems strikingly high, but not so much so if one remembers the shortage of skilled labour in Russia and the universal demand for more education. That demand is perhaps the most striking result of the Five Year Plan, so far as its cultural achievements are concerned.

THE FACTORY : MANAGEMENT AND WORKING  
CONDITIONS

Now let me turn to the management and working conditions in the factory. There is a very marked difference in atmosphere between a Russian factory and an English one. It is something which is obvious, at once, and its impression deepens as one sees more factories ; but it is not easy to convey on paper. One point is that the relations between the management of the factory and the workers in it are different. There is a healthy freedom in ordinary conversation. One feels that no worker would hesitate for a minute to approach the manager or anyone else in charge, if he had any reason for doing so, and also that he would have quite sufficient regard for the manager's time not to approach him unless he had some reason. At the door of the manager's room in a Moscow factory there was a rather typical notice, for the manager to read as he came in : " Comrade A—, we expect of you a quick tempo and increased production." And in every factory—every institution, in fact, including banks and Government offices and even prisons—there is a " wall newspaper," an affair of caricatures and typed and signed articles, with criticisms of working conditions and factory management.<sup>1</sup> No doubt the independence is to some extent an official independence: it is encouraged as a deliberate piece of policy. But there is too much vigour in the result to say that the wall newspaper is merely " eye-wash " : you may compel people to have a wall newspaper, but I know no means of compelling them to have such funny pictures in it. The wall newspaper is pretty universal, but in the larger factories (and prisons !) it is supplemented by a printed factory newspaper that is circulated in the working-rooms, usually at the modest price of five kopecks. The kind of criticism, which is embodied in wall newspapers, newspapers and so on, seems to show, not only a free attitude towards the management

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on " Radio, Press, and Publishing."

of the factory, but also a real wish to make the factory efficient.

The actual standard of efficiency is production up to or beyond the figures of the Plan. In a good many factories there is a rivalry of floors or departments. You may find a large diagram showing the percentages of Planned production, which each department has reached, and the performance of the various departments symbolised by the pictures of different animals—the most successful by a hare and the least successful by a snail or tortoise. In every working-room there will be hanging up a slate, half red and half black, with the names of the most successful workers on the red part and the least successful on the black. That sort of thing might be intolerable unless it had the general support of those working in the factory, but it would also be unworkable without that support: the slate would tend to be left blank quite soon. In practice it does work, and I can only conclude, from this and other signs, that “speeding up” is a quite different matter in a socialist factory. The various percentages of Planned production which I happened to see were not very far off 100 per cent. one way or another; but any substantial increase over Planned figures means an increase in wages. This increase is not, of course, an individual matter, since the Plan does not stipulate for any particular individual output. But, in a collective agreement for wages, a 10 per cent. increase above the Planned output would mean that a worker, who would otherwise get 150 roubles a month, would get about 175–180 roubles: that, at least, was the instance given to me.

#### TRADE UNIONS AND COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

It is clearly important, when you are engaged on a collective “hustle,” that the interests of the individual worker should be safeguarded, not only in national arrangements, but even more in each factory. His wages are a

national matter—arranged as part of the Plan, in conformity with prices, but embodied in collective agreements between the factory, or each section of the factory, and the trade union concerned. Each major industry has a single trade union, with various sections ; so that, for instance, in a textile mill, carpenters and metal-workers will be members of the textile union—though there is also a metal-workers' union, to which the metal-workers would otherwise belong. The collective agreement or agreements in a factory will, therefore, be made with one union : in the case of specialists they may be supplemented (but not superseded) by supplementary individual agreements. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into the general question of labour legislation in Russia. For the present purpose it is sufficient to point out that, since wages and prices are part of the Plan, and since the worker's interests as a wage earner are protected by trade-union representation on Planning bodies, the character of the trade union in Russia is different from that which it is bound to have in capitalist countries. In Russia a trade union is not struggling against an employer or an employers' federation ; it is representing one factor in a Plan, which is the workers' Plan.

But, besides the rate of wages, there is the very important matter of working conditions and individual questions in any factory. This matter is provided for, in the first instance, by the method of factory management. It must be remembered that the manager of a Russian factory is not concerned with the purchase of raw materials or with the sale of his manufactured products. He works under a trust, which deals with the commercial side of the factory—that commercial side being, in effect, a part of the Plan. The manager has, therefore, to attend to two things : production and factory conditions. But he is only one point, though probably the most important point, of the triangle, which controls the factory. The other two points are the chairman or secretary of the Fabkom (factory committee), and the secretary of the factory branch of the Communist Party.



The Fabkom—or, as I sometimes heard it called, Rabkom (workers' committee)—is the factory branch of the trade union ; looked at in another way, it is the collective representation of the workers in the factory. If a worker has a grievance against the management and gets no redress from the manager—for he is always expected to approach the manager first—he brings the matter before his shop steward and then before the Fabkom. The Fabkom seems, in practice, likely to get its own views carried as against the management, for it is more closely identified with what Russians call “ the collective.” “ The collective ” in a factory means the factory community and its common opinion. It is the basic unit of that mass opinion and mass intention upon which Russia, as a State, is grounded. “ The collective ” enforces rights and enforces responsibilities ; “ comradely courts,” before which a worker may be brought for reprimand or dismissal, are an expression of “ the collective ” ; and “ the collective ” has a kind of dispensing power, if laws or regulations press hardly in some individual case. There must be quite a number of individual disputes, since the collective agreements provide for a large number of categories of workers in various factories—and also most of Russia seems to be on piecework. I suspect that, in most cases, the Fabkom gets its way ; but there is a system of arbitration between representatives of the Fabkom and of the management, with appeals to similar arbitration courts constituted on a larger scale. I gathered, however, from Fabkom chairmen as well as from factory managers, that most cases are settled without recourse to such appeals.

#### THE PLACE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The third member of the triangle is the local secretary of the Communist Party. I must have been singularly lucky with the C.P. secretaries I met : they all happened to be particularly charming people. No doubt the position

needs some tact. The Party is really concerned to see, on broad lines, that the Plan is working—and working on Communist lines. I do not gather that the business of this member of the triangle is so much to see to any particular worker's grievance as to keep the right spirit in the factory. The manager is probably a member of the Party and susceptible, if needs be, to Party discipline. But by no means all the workers will be Party members, and I was rather surprised to find the number of people in responsible positions who were not Party members. After all, even in the large towns, in 1930 there was only one Party member among every 200 inhabitants—or one Party member among every ten industrial workers. But the number is rising : for instance, among 4,000 workers in a Kharkov factory there were 945 members in August 1932, of whom about 245 had joined in the preceding twelve months.

Also the proportion of Komsomol members (as it were, League of Youth) is generally larger than that of full Party members.

Before I leave the triangle, I ought to point out that it is by no means the only safeguard of the Russian factory worker. There is a system of factory inspection, which seems efficient. I discovered, by enquiry, various health improvements (ventilation, etc.), which had been put in as a result of inspection under the Commissariat of Health or under the local Soviet. In addition, there is the R.K.I.—or, more fully, the People's Commissariat for Workers' and Peasants' Inspection. The R.K.I. is very closely identified with the Communist Party, and its object is to see that the Plan is proceeding efficiently and honestly and on Communist lines. Its inspector may go anywhere—into a factory, a bank or a Government office—and you are not told about the R.K.I. unless you ask. I suspect it of being an extremely efficient organisation and a necessary protection against the possibility of bureaucratic despotism, jobbery or graft.

## HOURS AND HOLIDAYS

What are the hours and holidays of a Russian factory worker?

The factories I visited were working seven-hour shifts, with an additional one hour or so for a meal. I did not happen to visit any heavy-industry factories or mines, in which, I believe, the hours are shorter: I understand that the seven-hour day becomes—in mines, for instance—a six-hour day. The “working week” is five days, so that every sixth day is a holiday—an arrangement which makes it almost impossible to remember the days of the week.

There are five national holidays every year, besides the regular sixth day. As regards a longer holiday, a worker in a light industry gets two “weeks” on full pay, in heavy industry four “weeks.” I have already mentioned the special case of time off for women workers if they have a child.

There is provision, out of the Social Insurance Fund, for Homes of Rest in the towns and in such parts of the country as the Crimea. To some extent these are designed to provide special holidays by way of reward for workers who are thought to have specially deserved them; but they seem to be also available to a good proportion of workers in the ordinary course of things. My information, for instance, from the Social Insurance Department was that 60 per cent. of miners go to Homes of Rest every year.

## SOCIAL INSURANCE

It is perhaps convenient at this point to mention some of the other activities of the Social Insurance Department. Its funds are raised entirely out of the profits of socialised industry, by way of contributions from employing bodies. These contributions now average about 14 per cent. of wages paid. There is no contribution from the worker. The fund is collected on behalf of the U.S.S.R., but the

money collected is paid out to the various Republics and administered under trade union control. The fund has accumulated a considerable surplus, due partly to the disappearance of unemployment (for which no benefit is now required or paid) and partly to the increase in the total of contributions owing to the rapid development of industry. Benefits include sickness benefit, paid by the factory at the full rate of wages and repaid to the factory out of the fund, maternity benefit and an allowance of nine to twelve roubles a month for nursing mothers—this being in addition to full pay during the “maternity holiday.” The fund also provides for medical care and hospital treatment. Periodic inspection—by the factory or some other doctor—supplemented by the general supervision of the Fabkom, is said to prevent malingering. If the worker’s wife is not herself employed and entitled to benefit as a worker, she gets medical attention and hospital treatment as dependent on her husband. A totally disabled worker gets insurance payments and benefit for life, and his wife and children are supported after his death. All wage-workers are now covered by the scheme, including workers on collective or State farms. The commencing age is sixteen, and workers from the country who enter urban employment come into the scheme after six months. All who have been employed for twenty-five years get old age pensions at the age of sixty, to the amount of half their wages for their last year of employment. Workers in mines, metal-works and the textile and chemical trades get their old age pensions at the age of fifty and can continue to work longer if they choose. The surplus of the fund, in addition to providing the above benefits and payments for workers’ holidays at the homes of rest, is used to provide nurseries, kindergartens, special diets for certain factory workers in cases, for instance, of diabetes, consumption or stomach trouble, and sanatoria. Admission to sanatoria is given on medical recommendation—liberally it seems, for about 20 per cent. of the miners are said to go there annually. The medical staff of the sanatoria are

provided by the Ministry of Health, but paid out of the Social Insurance Fund.

#### WAGES

Wages are reckoned at so many roubles per month, but paid fortnightly. In Moscow and Leningrad the lowest rate for unskilled labour seems to be about 80 roubles per month. Though I heard that there was some employment at appreciably lower figures, I never found an instance, except in the case of learners coming from the country to a Moscow cotton-mill, and paid during their first six months at the rate of 45 roubles. As the lowest rate of wages in a labour colony for hardened criminals in the country near Moscow is 75-80 roubles, it may perhaps be safely assumed that there is not much regular employment under that figure in the towns. Generally I take 100 roubles a month as the rate for unskilled labour. That rate would obviously be too high for the country as a whole, since the average rate of all industrial wages is only 101.10 roubles ; but the proportion of skilled labour at higher rates must be small, and, on the figures in Moscow and in Leningrad, 100 roubles for unskilled labour seems a fair rate. In a cotton-mill at Leningrad the lowest rate was from 150 to 180 roubles ; in a cotton-mill at Moscow unskilled labour was paid at rates varying from 75 to 180 roubles ; in a clothing factory at Kharkov unskilled workers were getting from 70 to 150 roubles. All these rates were paid for what seemed to be quite unskilled work, and, for any degree of skill, rates rise pretty steeply. In the Kharkov clothing factory cutters, who, I was told, took about two years to learn their job after coming in from the country, were getting from 200 to 300 roubles. In the Moscow cotton-mill, designers of finished goods were getting the same rates. Technicians who attended to machinery in the Leningrad mill were getting from 300 to 400 roubles ; engineers (one or two per floor) 500 roubles. A reliable informant put the wages of " cotton lasses " in Moscow at between 100 and

150 roubles. An unskilled woman worker in a factory for making electrical apparatus in Leningrad was getting 100 roubles. A half-trained aeroplane fitter (is an "improver" the right name?) was getting 100 roubles. A Leningrad docker was getting 200 roubles. It should be remembered that most of the above rates represent average earnings on piecework, not time rates.

Technical and managerial jobs are better paid, although—for reasons I will give shortly—the actual difference is not as large as would appear from the figures alone. Our guides (and who should say whether they should be called technical or managerial?) received 250 roubles a month. A student of agricultural economy was paid 225 roubles. Floor managers in the Kharkov clothing factory got 325 roubles. In the Leningrad cotton-mills the manager—a "Red director" with some fifteen years experience in German mills—got 550 roubles, while two engineer "directors" under him got 700 roubles each. So far as I could gather, the former limitations on the earnings of members of the Communist Party have lately been relaxed: they are, however, expected to live simply and are answerable to the Party if they fail to do so: they are also expected to do unpaid work for the Party out of hours. I should put the maximum salary of technicians or managers in a small or medium-sized factory at about 1,000 roubles a month, though there are rather higher rates in large factories and there may be some exceptional cases of appreciably higher earnings: writers and artists, for instance, can earn larger amounts by way of royalties or payments for performances or pictures.<sup>1</sup>

I conclude, then, that the average wage for unskilled work in large towns is about 100 roubles a month, for skilled work from 200 to 400 or 500 roubles or more, and, for technical or supervisory work, up to 700 or 1,000 roubles.

<sup>1</sup> See chapter by R. W. Postgate in this volume.

## THE WORKER'S BUDGET

What do these figures mean in practice? What, in fact, is the rouble worth?

The only answer to the question "What is the rouble worth?" is: "It depends where you spend it." But, before coming to the worker's budget I should like to remind the reader that in Soviet Russia the worker's wife is more likely to be herself a worker than she would be in this country. That may be partly a matter of tradition, but it can only be the existence of factory and other crèches, kindergartens, etc., that has made it possible for the employment of women to be so extensive and, I may add, for so many of them to be employed in responsible jobs. The normal budget is, therefore, based on the earnings of two people. For instance, the wife of the Leningrad docker, whom I have already mentioned as earning 200 roubles a month, was herself earning between 120 and 150 roubles. Now, as regards food, the worker will normally get at least one good meal a day at his factory. If he is working in an office or a shop, he will get it from a co-operative kitchen. The average price is about half a rouble for a meal of soup, a good dish of meat and vegetables, and a sweet. He is also entitled to certain rations at his co-operative stores. Membership of a co-operative society is as essential in Russia as membership of a trade union. About two-thirds of the whole retail trade of the country is done through co-operatives, and rations are normally distributed through "closed co-operatives," open only to the members of such and such a factory or organisation. There is, for instance, a "closed co-operative" in Leningrad for foreign consuls and certain foreign experts; and, in the same way, there are co-operatives for factories or institutions. The rations differ slightly as between manual workers and others. Manual workers, for instance, get  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lb. (1 kilo) of bread daily, half white and half black, while non-manual workers get about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  lb. (2 Russian lb.) ; but, in general, I doubt whether the difference in quantity is very material—what

matters more is that the manual workers seem to get the first chance of supplies. The bread ration, so far as I could see and hear, was always available—and so were rations of tea and sugar, though I heard of some sugar shortage in the Crimea. Other rationed goods were meat, butter or a substitute, fish, and a cereal (millet, I think) for porridge. The millet was always available, but there was some shortage of the other supplies. Supplies of meat seem to have been sufficient up to some time in the spring of 1932, but since then to have been available only occasionally. There was rather more fish about, but there too a distinct shortage since the spring ; and my informants did not think well of the quality of fish available. One has to remember, of course, that a factory worker would get his factory meal of meat in addition to any rationed supplies ; and, to judge from the appearance of shops and stores in Kharkov and Kiev, there was more meat available in the Ukraine. Rationed butter was rarely available, though butter could be bought at higher prices in the open market ; but, by way of ration, some substitute for butter—such as margarine or sunflower oil—was generally available. The importance of these rationed foods to the worker lies largely in their price, which is much lower than that of goods bought otherwise. So far as I could judge from pricing goods in a Moscow co-op., prices were such that the rouble, expended on rationed goods in a co-op., was worth about 2s. ; but I give some actual prices, so that the reader can decide for himself or herself. The prices per kilo (2½ lb.) were as follows : rye bread, 10 kopecks (100 kopecks to a rouble) ; wheat bread, 30 kopecks ; sugar, 95 kopecks ; lump sugar, 1.25 roubles ; butter, various prices from 2.40 to 4.10 roubles ; tea, 14 or 18.40 roubles ; milk, 48 kopecks or (pasteurised) 56 kopecks a litre (1¾ pints). Meat varied, according to my information, between 1 and 2 roubles a kilo. The shortage, it will be noticed, is of the cow and its products—meat, butter and, to some extent, milk (though milk was available for children and for hospitals, etc.). No doubt it is the result of the shortage of cattle. The prices



do not correspond to English prices : bread is cheap in proportion to the imported tea and sugar.

The co-op., beside selling food on the official ration cards, also sells large quantities of other food and other necessities at reasonable prices. If there is a shortage, the co-op. itself may ration the goods among its customers. As regards food, in the co-op. I saw, there seemed to be a good supply of vegetables in season and a certain amount of fruit. There was, for instance, plenty of cabbages, beetroots, tomatoes and water melons. There were ready-made clothes, there were some of the usual household implements and a miscellaneous collection of the sort of goods that may be found in any English store. The quality was indifferent and there were some shortages in the stock. The most notable omissions were "dry goods," cheese, sausages and so on—and some shortage of ironmongery and small haberdashery. Clothes, shoes and household goods are to some extent rationed at a co-op. As regards prices, these are proportionately higher than the prices for bread and the like ; and I put the "co-op. rouble" at between 6*d.* and 1*s.* for this class of stuff. Shoes cost various prices between 14 and 60 roubles ; linen shirts, 4.50 or 4.90 roubles ; trousers, 12–20 roubles ; and a man's suit of clothes, 70–115 roubles. A woman's cotton dress (jumper and skirt) cost 36 roubles, but a silk dress (poor quality, quite unrationed) cost 140 roubles, if you chose to pay for it.<sup>1</sup>

My impression is, though actual figures are difficult to obtain and are rather uncertain, that an unskilled worker or the family of an unskilled worker could and would get along reasonably well on nothing but co-operative purchases. Such a worker and his family would in some respects be better off, in others worse off, than in England. But there is no doubt that most wage earners in Russia have a margin for spending beyond what they can spend in their co-operative : the stocks in the latter are, after all, pretty

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mrs. Cole for assistance in collecting some of the information on co-operative and other prices, for the use of her notes, and for a number of valuable suggestions.

restricted. The next level of prices is to be found in Government and municipal shops or "open co-ops." Such establishments are more concerned with household and other manufactured goods than with food. I did not have the opportunity of any detailed examination of prices in these public shops, but they are considerably higher than in "closed co-ops." The rationed butter, which costs about 2.40 roubles a kilo in a "closed co-op." would cost, if bought unrationed in a State shop, 6 roubles a kilo. A pair of shoes, costing 22 roubles in a "closed co-op.," would cost about 100 roubles in a State shop. You are dealing here with a rouble worth somewhere about 2*d.* or 3*d.*

#### THE OPEN MARKET

There were, so far as I could see, virtually no shops other than the public shops in some form or another—State, municipal or co-operative. But there remains the "open market"—principally for purposes of food, but also for secondhand goods—a kind of Caledonian Market, for instance, in some Moscow streets. So far as food is concerned, the "open market," often on the outskirts of a town, is a place to which peasants may bring farm produce for direct sale ; or you may have an informal "open market" in some street or at a wayside railway station. One important feature of the "open market" is that collective farms are allowed and encouraged to sell their produce there direct to customers, and to undercut the prices of the individual peasant. That is one of the outlets for collective farm produce ; another is through shops opened by the collective farms themselves ; a third is, of course, by way of sale to co-operative or State shops or distributive agencies ; a fourth is by direct agreement with some factory (or institution), to sell the factory the food for its factory dinner—and such agreements may contain provisions for the employment at the factory of collective farm workers out of season, or for the delivery of factory

goods to the collective farms in exchange for agricultural produce. As regards "open market" selling, the collective farm prices are about comparable to those in State shops, "open co-ops.," etc. But, at the end of it all, there remains—to an appreciable extent—the produce of the individual peasant farmer, sold in the "open market" at prices higher than those ruling anywhere else. The existence of such a surplus at such prices is an indication that there really is some scarcity in Russia—scarcity which the Russian admits, if you ask him, and, so far as I could see, bears willingly as part of the Plan. "Open market" prices vary considerably from place to place. Ten eggs in the "open market" just outside Kiev cost  $4\frac{1}{2}$  roubles; in Moscow,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  roubles. Plums were  $2\frac{1}{2}$  roubles a kilo in Moscow, but only 1 rouble in Kiev. These were the prices asked, but obviously they were a matter for bargaining. There was no butter to be seen at Moscow, but the information about "open market" butter is interesting, as it shows clearly the extraordinarily variable price of any article which can be considered a luxury. A guide at Leningrad was very proud of being able to get butter direct from the country at 6 roubles a kilo. Other reliable information suggested that butter usually cost about 25 roubles a kilo in the "open market" at Leningrad or Moscow. Near Kiev, 8 roubles per lb. was asked for butter, and 6 roubles would probably have been accepted. Now compare those figures with the rationed and State store prices mentioned above. It seems fairly clear that rationed butter, when available, costs from 2.40 to 4.10 roubles a kilo, that butter in a State store (or probably from a collective farm) costs about 6 roubles a kilo—which seems to be the actual country price—and that "open market" butter varies in price according to the local supply and demand from 15 to 18 roubles a kilo at Kiev in the Ukraine to 25 roubles or so in Moscow or Leningrad. The figures show very clearly how difficult it is to say what the rouble is worth. On an average I should put the "open market" rouble for food at rather under 2d. But its value for other purposes is quite different.

Inland postage on a letter is only 8 kopecks. From Kharkov to Kiev is about the same distance as from London to Carlisle: the Russian "hard"-class railway ticket costs 10.37 roubles; the English, 37s. 6d.—which would give the rouble a "travelling" value of about 3s. 7d.

#### PLANNED PRICES

There is an interesting point in connection with the operation of these prices. It is clear that a man can get along with just enough to eat, living very simply, for a comparatively low figure. As soon as he begins to supplement that very plain living with additions, his cost of living begins to go up disproportionately. If, to use a metaphor, he lives on bread alone, he lives pretty cheaply: butter costs more in proportion than the bread; and, if he wants to add jam, that costs still more. The result is that prices serve to level up disparities of income. A man who gets 200 roubles a month does not, in actual value, get twice as much as a man who gets 100 roubles—and, still more, a man who gets 800 roubles does not get eight times as much. This is not accidental; the prices in a co-op. or State shop are deliberately arranged, with some slight elasticity. No one arranges the "open market" peasant, and accordingly his competitor, the collective farm, has to arrange its prices to some extent in competition with him. But in the large towns the fixed prices of the co-ops. and State shops are quite enough to establish a general level and to allow the Government, in effect, to set the worker's standard of living in conformity with the wages he receives. There is little doubt that that standard of living has been kept pretty low, to enable Russia to work the Plan and get herself established. That has been, I think, a deliberate and willing sacrifice on the part of Russian workers. In the next Five Year Plan it is intended to raise their standard of living.

Before I leave the subject of co-ops., there are one or  
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two points I should like to mention. One is that, I understand, a good deal of artisan work, both in the way of manufacturing and of repairing, is done in Moscow and other large towns by "Artels," which are co-operative associations of producers : in the same way a collective farm is usually an Artel. Workers in Artels are recognised and encouraged by the State, and I am only sorry that time did not allow me to investigate their position in industrial towns. It is at least conceivable that their numbers will tend to decrease with the large-scale industrial development of the country ; but handicrafts are still important in Russia.

#### CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISATION

Secondly, a few words about co-operative organisation may be interesting. It is, in effect, used as the principal medium for retail distribution in the country, the proportion of retail trade being as follows : co-ops. 65 per cent., State and other public agencies 30 per cent., private trade less than 5 per cent. The extension of the organisation is comparatively recent : in 1927 its proportion of the retail trade of the country was only 14 per cent. In turnover the figures are : 1928, 22½ million roubles ; 1931, 73½ million roubles. Although the organisation is on co-operative lines, it is an organ of the State and not a separate body. Three hundred or more members may form a local co-operative, using the model rules approved by Centrosoyus (the central co-operative body) : there are district unions of co-ops., which serve as buying and selling agencies between Centrosoyus and the local bodies.

The co-operatives manufacture on a large and increasing scale, and I was given rather an interesting instance of "shortage." In 1913 the Russian co-ops. manufactured about 8½ million pairs of shoes and boots ; in 1931, 77 million pairs ; and in 1932 they will have manufactured about 100 million pairs. Their output for goloshes has gone up from 37 millions in 1927 to 54 millions in 1931 and 90

millions in 1932. But there is a shortage of shoes and goloshes; and the reason is that, before the revolution, 120 million people out of a population of 140 millions either went unshod or wore shoes of birch-bark. Another activity of the co-operatives is food production on a large scale. Centrosoyus owns over a million acres of kitchen gardens; they are gradually taking the bakery business completely into their hands, and in the large towns they have co-operative kitchens for supplying meals to factories, employees of co-operative stores, public offices, etc. In Rostov-on-Don in 1928 there were 130 private bakeries producing bread to sell at  $7\frac{1}{2}$  kopecks a loaf. A large co-operative mechanical bakery was set up, equipped with English machinery supplied from the C.W.S. The price of bread was reduced first to 6 kopecks, then to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  kopecks; and all private bakeries disappeared. One reason, of course, is the economy in the use of fuel on a large scale. It is perhaps rather characteristic of Russia that the co-operatives were at first so impressed with the possibilities of large-scale production that they made the bakeries too large for economical distribution, and they are now reducing the size of the unit. The retail prices in co-operative stores are fixed as part of the Plan by a body described to me as the "Committee of Funds and Prices" of the Council of Labour and Defence. I understand the same body allocates supplies between various districts and co-ops. The prices are passed down to the individual co-op. stores through Centrosoyus and the district union in the form of wholesale prices, upon which the store is not to make more than a certain profit. The general limit for profit in the Moscow store which I visited was  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. yearly. The particular figures of that store showed not only an increase in turnover, but also a very reasonable cost of marketing. In 1931 the turnover, for 8,000 members (many of whom were registered elsewhere for their food rations), was 27 million roubles. For the Planned turnover for 1932, 36 million roubles was suggested by the authorities, but this had been increased by the staff of the co-op. to 41 million roubles, of which

62 per cent. had actually been put through in the first six months of the year. Of this figure the food departments only accounted for between 6 and 7 million roubles. The total cost of marketing—that is to say, the expense of running the store, which included wages, rent, transport of goods, etc.—amounted in the first quarter of 1932 to 3.91 per cent. of the turnover, and in the second quarter to 3.64 per cent. The rent—it was a very large building—amounted to about 100,000 roubles a year. The building was insured with the State Insurance Department and the premiums charged as expenses in the accounts. There were 470 people employed at the store at an average wage of 175 roubles a month: “buyers” got between 250 and 350 roubles a month, and ordinary assistants from 130 to 150 roubles. Among the 470 employees about 65 were members of the Communist Party and 70 were Komsomols. There was a collective wage agreement between the store and the trade union of co-operative and State trade workers, and supplementary agreements between each department of the store and the workers in it. Any dispute between a co-op. member and the store was referred to a committee of members: it had never become necessary in practice to refer it to the general committee of members of the co-op.

#### HOUSING AND RENTS

Another important activity of the co-operative organisation in Russia is housing—and that leads me from the worker's food to his accommodation. The reader will have noticed that food is comparatively dear in Russia: housing on the other hand is cheap. Everyone is entitled, in theory, to a certain amount of floor space. In Moscow this is a minimum of 6 square metres and a maximum of 9 square metres. As I have already indicated, the rapid growth of the population in Moscow and in Leningrad has made it extremely difficult to deal with the overcrowding which already existed there and which still exists. The result is

great activity in new building—so that, in Moscow, the numbers accommodated in new flats have begun to exceed the numbers arriving from the country. In new buildings a larger minimum housing space is allowed than in accommodation already existing. The allowance differs in different trades : in the textile trade it is  $6\frac{1}{2}$  to 7 square metres ; and for metal-workers, 8 square metres. Rent up to the maximum rationed accommodation stands at so much per square metre, the figure being proportional to the wages of the occupant. For instance, in Leningrad (and the Moscow figures are about the same) for a wage of 150 roubles the rent is 42 kopecks per square metre : for each extra 10 roubles wages there is 10 kopecks extra per square metre. The rationed accommodation is larger if the family is larger. Above the ration the cost of any additional space goes up sharply. In Leningrad it is three times the cost of the rationed space. The scale of rent is not the same for all parts of the town. A Red Army veteran living in a new flat paid half rent because of his distinguished service and medal. To take actual instances : a man earning 100 roubles monthly would pay about 12 roubles a month in the new flats built by a textile factory at Moscow, while the Leningrad docker whom I have already mentioned paid 15 roubles a month in his new flat. I estimate rent, quite roughly, as between 10 and 15 per cent. of wages for unskilled labourers. Such services as electricity, etc., are cheaper than in England.

#### CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING AND BUILDING

I have no space for more than a summary outline of the organisation of co-operative housing and building in Moscow. There are small local housing co-operatives and building co-operatives, controlled by larger organisations in the towns, in the districts, in the republics, and finally in the Union (U.S.S.R.). The housing co-operative covers an average area of about 1,000 square metres, and leases



flats to its members at a rent based on the cost of maintaining and repairing the buildings, not on their value or on that of the land. Any surplus obtained by letting premises at a higher rent as shops or offices goes partly to a municipal housing fund, partly to a centralised fund for repairs and for subsidising the poorer housing co-operatives. A building co-operative can be formed by 100 members in a town, or 25 in the country. Its building operations are financed, as to 10 per cent., by members' subscriptions, and as to 90 per cent., from other sources—the central co-operative bank (Central Bank of Communal Economics), a fund for the "Improvement of the Standard of Life of Employees and Workers" (established at the same bank out of deductions from industrial profits), and loans at a low rate of interest from the municipal housing fund. No rent is paid for the land, which is chosen by agreement with the local Soviet. The completed building belongs to the co-operative, and the shares of members may be assigned or bequeathed subject to the approval of the co-operative committee. The buildings are insured with the State Insurance Department. Building generally is planned by the Regional Planning Committee (Mosgosplan in Moscow). Demolitions are directed by the Moscow Soviet, except that the demolition of a church requires the special authorisation of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party.

#### CONCLUSION

I must leave it to the reader to decide from the above facts, according to his own convictions, whether the Russian worker is or is not contented and prosperous. My own view is that he is more than contented, but rather less than prosperous. I do not believe that the general impression of enthusiasm for the Plan and of determination to overcome its difficulties is one which can be produced merely by a Government, however efficient. Still less do I think that such an impression could be conveyed to visitors in the

country if no such feelings in fact existed. It is easy, at a distance, to exaggerate difficulties of language : one can always keep one's eyes open ; there are many Russians who speak English, French or German, and I, like others, knew various foreigners living in Russia. As regards prosperity, the Russian worker is very much better off in the way of such matters as clubs, parks, medical and educational institutions, or holidays. His housing is improving rapidly. He does not live more than plainly—as, indeed, he has lived plainly in the past. But I do not think that he is “ half starved ”—and to that conclusion I am led as much by the appearance of crowds in the streets as by any other facts. He could, no doubt, do with more food, more varied food, and more manufactured goods. It may well be that there will be little or no improvement in those respects this winter (1932–1933). But I believe that he accepts those difficulties as part of a Plan for reconstituting Russia, and that, if the First Five Year Plan is any test, the Second Five Year Plan should succeed in showing in those respects the improvement which it promises. It is significant of the spirit of a Socialist State that Russia has sought, in the first place, for education, for a communal spirit, and for a basis of industrial development, and is deliberately choosing by those means, at the cost of great economy and some hardship, to build on a sound foundation and on a colossal scale the first structure of a classless society.



# AGRICULTURE

by

JOHN MORGAN

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Introduction—Land Seen in Russia—The  
Volga Villages—Good Land and a Hungry  
Country—The Peasants and the Communist  
Party—The Break in World Prices—The Bad  
Harvests—Conclusion.



## INTRODUCTION

**SIX WEEKS** in Soviet Russia. Time enough to see a good many things, but hardly time enough for an agriculturist, however expert, to do more than form a few general impressions of what was taking place on those vast undulating stretches of dark soil which must continue to serve, as they have always served, as the foundations for the real Russia.

That one could not see more than one did in the time was no fault of the authorities. One's pockets bulged with permits and introductions for poultry-farms, pig-breeding stations, State and collective farms, plant-breeding stations, to be used how and when one could.

But an inch or two on an office wall-map stood for many a score miles of inaccessibility. Rural "Red" Russia has no roads. But neither quite evidently, had the Russia of Nicholas II. The peasant and his village must have looked much the same then as now. A thousand miles this way and another thousand the other left one in little doubt that "Mother Earth" had not changed a hundred generations' habits in a mere day and night as time goes.

## LAND SEEN IN RUSSIA

One travelled from Leningrad to Moscow in the middle of July and saw a wooded country stretching dense on either side as far as the eye could reach. Every now and then, a clearing of an acre or two. A rough-sawn timbered hut, a small stack of hay, sometimes two, a cow, again sometimes two, and a promising patch of potatoes, gave one a pretty good idea, I think, of a fairly typical standard of life for a large number of individual families in that kind of country.

They were rubbing along, isolated, vast distances from administrative and urban centres, much as their type had ever done.

The same sort of country lay either side of the railway from Moscow to Nijni Novgorod. Wooded for the most part, but with an increasing area of cleared land as one drew nearer the River Volga. Lumbering and the great rivers' navigability from that point had evidently prepared the way for the farming that had grown up. Some cereal crops, nearer Nijni a few herds of cattle, and again promising crops of potatoes. Quite evidently, potatoes were going to be a stand-by this winter, whatever else might be short. In fact, potatoes looked well all over Russia. I came to feel, the further I went and the more apprehensive I became about the general food prospects for the population in the coming months, that the potato crop might turn out to be a mainstay over a very trying period to come. But of that later.

Otherwise, that vast area north and east of a line drawn Leningrad—Moscow—Nijni Novgorod kept its mysteries from me. Latitude and a relatively sparse population only forced the conclusion that, apart from what seemed a still almost virginal wealth of timber, the agricultural output of such an area must be relatively unimportant. One was told of herds of reindeer being maintained up there to augment the State's meat supplies. One never saw the venison, and seeing's believing, though such a thing might well be true nonetheless.

One heard, more authoritatively, of the efforts of a world-famous plant-breeder to produce and propagate a wheat more suited to the climatic conditions of those hard winters and short summers than would be harvested farther south. It was an administrative notion that it would save transport and provide local self-sufficiency if such a wheat could be found and "fixed" in type. Not an entirely new idea. Professor Biffen has done much the same thing with "Yeoman" wheat for British climatic conditions.

But time and again one met the same sort of idea at

work in an important section of the Russian administrative mind. Basically, an absolutely rational approach in theory to their problems. The conceptions of management and development were, to my mind, to a most striking degree, sound and sensible. To an amazing extent they acclaimed without equivocation what ought to be done. Again and again some indication of master minds at work on some project or other brought to my notice, forced the conclusion on me that, whatever might be happening in the realm of effort and result, things were being boldly, clearly thought out by a good many of the minds concerned. They were ready to tackle anything, and often in the right way, if they could be certain as to it. And often when they were not. As my journey progressed, however, other aspects of the administrative machine filled me with considerable uneasiness, whilst my general impression of farming practice and output became a disappointed one by the end.

#### THE VOLGA VILLAGES

A four-days' trip down the River Volga, from Nijni Novgorod to Stalingrad, with breaks at Samara and Saratov, brought one in touch with the lay-out and inhabitants of farming areas more definitely involved in the Soviet scheme of things. Flat sandy stretches on the Asiatic bank through which flowed plenty of broad rivers from the Ural country suggested potentialities for future agricultural production that established a conviction, which grew with every day on, that Russia's agrarian troubles have arisen for other reasons than lack of natural resources, or the failure of seasons. On the more undulating and sometimes hilly European bank one saw a spread of villages sufficiently uniform in type to recognise the aptness of a collective system of farming operations and community life. Compact, every dwelling-place much like any other, surrounded by an open sweep of cultivable or grazing land on all sides, with no straggle of individualistic farmhouses anywhere,



with their hedged fields, as in Britain, they compelled me, as one familiar with village life, to a most hearty approval for Russia itself, of the *kolkhozi* system of rural development now in the forefront of new Russia's plans. It was in this area that local officials proudly claimed 80 per cent., and even 90 per cent., of the farms as "collectivised." Just what they had really accomplished remains to be seen. What they were so proud about, as mostly elsewhere, could only be a beginning. For it was not until June of 1931, according to figures supplied by Russian authorities themselves, that the *kolkhozi* system showed marked signs of expansion. From May 1930 to June 1931, according to these figures, the total number of *kolkhozes* in Sovietised Russia rose from 88,300 to 211,100. By January, 1932 this number had risen to 230,400, uniting 15,426,000 individual farms, or about 62½ per cent. of the total number of farms in the whole of Russia.

Unfortunately, the more natural factors of drought, famine, bad weather for sowing followed by even worse for harvesting, as I saw for myself on the next stage of my journeyings, coincided with this development, and played a big part in nullifying the practical effect, for immediate and imminent needs, of such a prime beginning.

Disembarking from the river steamer at Stalingrad, the few hundred miles between that centre of agricultural industry and Rostov-on-Don excited the imagination of the farmer in me. Here was a myriad acres of good land waiting to be farmed well, according to our standards. As it was, crops, thin mostly, covered big areas. One patch of sunflowers, bending gently in a slight breeze, made a patterned carpet of green, yellow and black that must have covered a thousand acres in one piece of a wide upland sweeping away to the skyline. A magnificent sight, repeated a dozen times that day. And not only sunflowers, grown for their oil for kitchen use in lieu of animal fats, but maize, rye and wheat. But there was little that was vigorous about the crops. It was the extent of the business that caught at one's imagination. Yields per acre were obviously low.

I looked for tractors at work. Camels passed. Old women sat on the platforms of reapers as old-fashioned as one can find anywhere, drawing the swathes into little heaps that dotted a landscape at times as wide as an English county. Here and there horse-drawn waggons loaded and unloaded the tail-ends of a hay crop spoilt with rain. But scarcely a tractor anywhere to be seen ; not at work on the land, anyway.

From Rostov, I was motored out to Verbliud, a 250,000-acre State farm. An American doctor went with me. He could talk good German. Waiting at the ferry to cross the River Don, we joined a company of peasants. The American doctor tried out his German with the usual affabilities. The response was in German. We were talking to a fifth generation of Russianised German settlers. And how was farming ? The reply was cautious but illuminating. " Bad ! And if things are bad for the farmer, then it's bad for the rest of the people."

Arrived at Verbliud, one saw a well-conceived but unconvincing pile of factory-like buildings. Machine-shops with more tractors and " combines," standing about for " testing," I was told, than I'd yet seen in the whole of my travels ; workers' clubs, laboratory and other paraphernalia of structures, left the farmer in me quite cold.

Could I see the farm ? A combine at work ? Where were the cows ? All this couldn't be kept going without crops ? As always, there was no real difficulty about getting one's way except insistence. But wouldn't I have a meal first ; do this, do the other. No, the American agreeing, we would get out on the land before it rained yet another day. For that was the prospect, and in the middle of harvest-time in Southern Russia !

Mile after mile we traversed from one section to another, looking for a combine at work that we never found. A farm " farmed out," as we say, if ever I saw one. Weed, and an especially pernicious variety at that, had ousted the cereals. The Verbliud I saw that day must be fallowed, broken up, and the land well cleaned before it can be made

to support even a half of the families I saw about the place. The whole affair wore a melancholy air. And before we could take advantage of that friendly meal, down came the rain, the car got stuck, and we were on our way back to Rostov, travelling "hard," by train. But not as hard as it sounds ; at least for the forty miles that that trip was. It would have been a different matter a few days later, when I made an informative thirty-six hours' trip from Rostov to the other side of this half-continent.

Kiev, the traditional capital of the Ukraine, with another thousand miles or so of as regularly good farming land as can be found in the world lying between it and the North Caucasus, I had left behind. And for the best part of the journey back to Moscow, later still, the same sort of useful land. In a matter of three weeks or thereabouts I had encompassed the largest lump of good food-growing land it has yet been my lot to look over.

#### GOOD LAND AND A HUNGRY COUNTRY

Yet the country it belonged to was a hungry country. And run by Socialists. As one myself, this state of things set me the poser I had to satisfy myself about. How had this come about ?

In Leningrad I had traced back the maternity centres' source of milk supplies to a fairly adequate State farm. But I had witnessed many a scrabble for milk that took place every morning in the meaner streets behind the hotel. Peasant-girls haggling with housewives at prices that were extortionate.

Moscow took me, willingly enough, to pig farms, market gardens, an institute of animal husbandry, a first-class State dairy farm, a collective farm village fifty miles out, 50,000-bird poultry farm, food markets. Every centre offered the same facilities. I poked round villages and farms, took cross-country walks, inspected rabbit farms, interviewed dozens of heads of various food trusts, breeding centres,

and enjoyed the courtesies of the consumers' co-operative movement, Centrosoyus, both centrally and in the provinces.

What had happened to agricultural Russia that with the machinery of organisation and distribution of which one found ample evidence, it was yet failing to meet even the reasonable requirements of the total population, let alone providing increasing exportable surpluses? Good land I had seen in all parts in abundance. There was no lack of that primary asset; and one day, I am confident, Russia will draw upon it to the full. But the plain fact is, she isn't doing so at the moment, and the present moment happens to be a particularly awkward one for her in the matter of food supplies. It was now that the stimulus of an augmented, improved food ration would have been looked upon by the factory workers, as well as the general mass of the population, as something in the nature of a fitting reward for the privations and civic responses made over the past ten years. To have been able to markedly expand the food supply of the country at this juncture would have renewed the magnificent impulse which has quite obviously moved vital sections of the community to re-generate so outstandingly many of our human institutions.

Already the Russian people are ahead of the rest of us in many ways. They are a freed people in several desirable directions. Even the most prejudiced visitors to the country that I met, in and out of it, admit as much. And what I have to say in this chapter of this general report, critical of what I saw and felt as an agriculturist, by no means invalidates the rest. I saw other permanent contributions being worked out that mankind as a whole will acclaim as time passes.

Then what has gone wrong with their agriculture? In theory things may be progressing pretty much as central policy had planned. But I can't believe it.

Three converging factors seem to me to be responsible for the impending impasse.

## THE PEASANTS AND THE COMMUNIST POLICY

First, the peasant himself, intractable, recalcitrant, suspicious. A bond-serf as recently as 1870. Illiterate, repressed, exploited, the Revolution provides him with access to the land from 1917 to 1922. It would have been strange if a hundred million peasants, so suddenly endowed with a lively sense of a rightful access to the land, did not develop an intense individualism. My own land, my own labour applied to it, my own rights to the sweet fruits of that labour, is the commonest characteristic and social impediment of the peasant everywhere. Educated, taught by hard experience, as in Denmark, they come to learn the need for co-operation. But not the first moment after centuries of oppression have rolled off one's back, with one's feet for the first time on one's own soil. To suppose otherwise would be not to know the peasant. And the Russian peasant is much like any other peasant, only more so.

The landless peasant, forced to snatch a living from under the very nose of landlordism, seldom says what he thinks, and employs a peculiar cunning to get a bit more than his bargain, or give a bit less. The Revolution gave him the land. What else should be bothered about? But levies, decrees, this and that innovation, pressures of one kind and another, poured their insistences upon him. Having established it, the Central Party, in the words of Molotov, head of the People's Commissars for the U.S.S.R., "launched a drive against antiquated petty individual farming in the early days of the Five Year Plan." "The drive" Molotov referred to was towards collectivisation. Yet it is not until January 1931 that the figures dealing with the number of "collective farms" so far organised show any marked increase.

Referring to the special difficulties created last year in the Ukraine area, Molotov, speaking in July 1932, said that "in a good many districts and collective farms, after they had fulfilled their quotas, new quotas were given" dealing with the same crop. He went on: "In some cases

this repeated itself three or four times. In the case of the Drabova district, where the leaders were tried for the abuses, the lines laid down by the party were disregarded to an extraordinary degree. The slightest neglect of agricultural issues leads to most undesirable results."

Reproduce such an administrative process only a few times in various parts of a country and one can understand easily enough how a fair part of Russia's agricultural predicaments arose.

After all, the cultivating peasant has the whip-hand over a State so largely dependent on his initiative and enterprise. Produce uncertainty in his mind as to whose the crop is to be, and he'll not bother so much about the sowing of the next until he's more sure of his position in regard to it. Unlike a factory, in farming, if you miss a sowing-time you've lost a twelvemonth of time and a harvest. Up to the 1930 harvest at least, the Soviet Government was dependent upon peasant cultivation for at least 75 per cent. of the grain bought by it. Disturb confidence in those transactions over a long enough period, however valid the reasons, and the cumulative distrust, indefinitely, intangibly expressed, must have created an incredibly difficult administrative state of affairs over such a vast rural territory.

And a fair part of the period under review was spent in chasing out the kulak. I did not meet this fearsome creature, as such, though I found him still warmly regarded as a creature of horror by the folk, mostly urbanised, with whom I discussed him. One could see clearly enough that he would not willingly fit into "collectivisation." An employer, he must surrender his capital and prestige, his boundaries and prerogatives, and start again with the serf. He obstructed, he sabotaged. There's little doubt of it. He held out against the changes like a wolf with his teeth showing. But he was a marked man anyway. Communist theory had no use for him.

All the same, the drastic processes employed to "liquidate" the kulak couldn't have improved the peace of mind of the peasants invited to walk into his shoes at short

notice. Even a Russian peasant would take time to make up his mind what all these goings-on really meant. You might expropriate all the harsh farmers of England and still leave the farm worker (a much more possible subject for advancement than the average Russian peasant as I saw him) very much in doubt, if Whitehall was called in to take the farmers' place. It would be no solution to merely promote the more efficient labourer to take it.

But the going of the kulak bequeathed some distinct difficulties. It is estimated—and the figures were never disputed in Russia when I sought confirmation of them—that during the winter of 1929-30, when the kulak liquidation was at its height, no less than one quarter of all the cows, one third of the sheep, one half of the pigs, and 10 per cent. of the horses, throughout all Russia, were slaughtered by the threatened and eventually transported and disposed of kulaki.

The kulak also held the breeding stock of the country. It was to his boar that the peasant brought his single sow ; to his bull, the peasant's only cow. And it was not until well on in the following year that there is real evidence that the central administration really woke up to the significance of such a wholesale holocaust of breeding livestock.

So, it was not until as recently as 1931 that the State was able to put into effect the special measures designed to make good the breeding shortage caused by the kulak slaughtering. Large imports of pedigree bulls, boars and rams were made in that year, many of them from Britain. Breeding stations were established, first to minister to the requirements of the State farms, by this time a diminishing factor in marketable production, but of growing importance as training centres, animal and plant-breeding centres, demonstration and experimental farms. In the next resort, approved animals for breeding purposes would be passed on to the collective farm centres, replacing and extending the facilities formerly provided by kulaki and such means. Such facilities, incidentally, form part of the privileges held out to the individual peasant to join up with the collective

farm. But breeding-up takes time. It can't be speeded up. At the best three years must pass before the destroyed cows can be replaced ; pigs and sheep sooner. But that rate of increase depends upon adequate supplies of forage crops being available for the farm livestock. And that is in doubt.

Another deterrent to peasant initiative was the total abolition and prohibition of the ancient trading fairs, headed by the world-famous one at Nijni Novgorod. These fairs provided the peasant with both the excuse and the pleasure of social intercourse throughout a wide area. But it was also here that he sold his produce, bought and sold cattle and horses, whilst his womenfolk bought the household wares. The Communist aimed that blow at the trader and speculator, but it left a vast majority of the peasants also with only one market for their surplus grain, viz. the Government agency under whatever form of trust it happened to present itself. And these agencies only paid in State roubles, seldom by an exchange of commodities such as the peasant had been in the habit of doing. These roubles piled up. They could never be spent by the greater number of peasants living far from towns lucky enough to have State shops, the only kind permitted. Roubles lost their value to the peasant. They weren't worth selling and producing to obtain. One of the main inducements to cultivate, viz. to sell in order to be able to buy cloth and boots and trinkets and even vodka, was gone for the peasant. The towns wanted all they could get of such things and kept what there was of them. Whilst the peasant, hearing of the grandiose industrial schemes, presumed the factory worker was getting the lot as well as the food levied again and again from him.

On the townsman's side, as mischievous a view of the peasants' lot was springing up. The view gained ground with him that the peasant was not playing the game, would not part with the surplus food, had got the land and wouldn't work it properly. Peasants were eating eggs and butter that they ought to sell. And when they did sell, well ! compare their extortionate prices in the streets and



"free" markets with the factory "closed" shop or co-operative price! As a foreign visitor I was warned, advised time and time again not to buy off the peasant in the streets, if only to penalise him. He or she—as often as not the peasant salesman was a woman—was fast becoming an object of contempt. I felt an ugly gulf of resentment and mutual misunderstanding widening between town and country. The State prices, based upon more or less forced levies and yet assumed by the factory worker to be a standard price. The peasant holding out for an extravagant price to recoup himself for the forced sales, as well as to satisfy the impulses of a peasant's natural acquisitiveness.

#### THE BREAK IN WORLD PRICES

The second converging factor I had in mind as responsible for a large part of Russia's present food dislocations was the break in world primary commodity price levels. The huge purchase overseas of equipment for the heavy industrial programme of the Five Year Plan was arranged at a time when prices ruling for such primary produce as Russia could reasonably expect to export could, in the light of recent experience, be then regarded as satisfactory. Enormous foreign orders for machinery and material were placed on the basis of credits arranged for years ahead. Estimates and formal arrangements for the extinction of those credits at their due dates were based on the assumption, broadly speaking, that a given quantity of wheat or timber exported, as the case might be, would sell at sufficient prices to complete the transaction.

Such estimates and assumptions proved badly out. It is to Soviet Russia's abiding credit, judged by ordinary mercantile standards, that she kept even the letter of her bond. But to do so, over a fairly wide range of commodities, she had to double her demands on the productive capacity of her peasants. And this at a time—especially in the period 1929-1932—when a drought in the Volga region, a fully

mobilised Army kept in being for Japanese-Polish possibilities and needing to be well fed, a growing peasant recalcitrance, an increasing factory-fed population and now a poor harvest for 1932, strained her internal resources and reserves well-nigh to breaking-point. We shall see how far by the spring of 1933.

#### THE BAD HARVESTS

And the third set of factors could almost be described as a bit of bad luck, but the kind of bad luck that a farming community should ordinarily have put into their calculations. Nature has a nasty way of turning sulky at the wrong moment. But new Russia was thinking mechanistically, even of her farming. Drought ruined the 1931 grain harvest of five important sections of the Union, viz. the Lower and Middle Volga, Southern Urals, Western Siberia and Kazakstan. The Government, therefore, had to provide, in addition to the normal domestic and the abnormal export requirements, another 1,800,000 tons of grain to these regions for seeds and food. This was extracted from the Ukraine at a cost of considerable disaffection, and the Ukrainians responded by, in their turn, eating into a good part of their seed grain intended for the 1932 sowing. All the grain-growing areas planted thinly, the Ukraine seriously diminishing its acreage. Then the unusual happened for Russia. Last winter opened with heavy frosts instead of a customary protective covering of snow. The thin sowings were even more thinned by the destructive frosts. The following summer's growth was slow ; thin crops mean heavy weeds, and the stalks, or " straw," proved too short in many areas for the modern combine to do its work properly even when it was available. To cap it all, about half-way through the gathering of the 1932 harvest the weather broke across Southern Russia, still further spoiling an indifferent crop and further dispiriting the harvesters.

Expansion in what might be regarded as industrial crops,

such as cotton, flax and beet, have also doubtless diverted a considerable acreage that would otherwise have been utilised for more distinctly food crops.

#### CONCLUSION

Such are some of the factors that I feel sure will converge to make this winter and the coming spring a distinctly uncomfortable one for great masses of Russian citizens. An unlikely but possible easement would be for Russia to import some of the neighbouring surpluses of food.

A large proportion of Russia's agrarian difficulties are controllable, temporary and psychologically remediable. But adjustments are slow to make in agriculture. A falling off in primary exports would help greatly, on whatever ground that became possible. (One came across a significant amount of talk about an external loan, say, from America "next spring.") And as lucky a harvest next year as the last two have been luckless, would help too.

But the more permanent solution lies with the intensive encouragement and inductive stimulus of the collectivist system of village farming. The trader may come in, in some form or other, to exchange factory products for farm and garden produce, if the former can be turned out in sufficient quantities to meet the rising demand of the towns as well as the complaint of the villages.

The collective farm should stay, but the peasant, pooling his land, labour, implements and cattle, must be assured of a fair deal under standard conditions for a sufficient period of years to restore his confidence in the powers that be. The inducements are ample with which to entice the peasant from his individualism to more co-operative methods of production and marketing : facilities, for collective farm members only, of first-class breeding stock for the cattle they keep for themselves ; efficient machine and tractor stations, serving a reasonable area of collective farms and those only, so that the individual peasant, left

only with his primitive tools, sees objectively how ill he fares compared with his neighbours ; cultural and recreational facilities concentrated on the active collectivist centres ; relief and gradation of taxation. Perhaps, in order to avoid the intricacies of assessing justly the individual value to the concern of each man's daily labour, cash wages for this to be paid as at the factories. Otherwise one can foresee a host of local grievances arising from the quality and circumstances of the work done on farms under conditions which vary from day to day, being out-of-doors. Neither precept nor decree will of themselves hold the fabric of the collective farm in its place. There must be inducement ; there must be economic advantage. Russia has the land but a cunning peasant will be working it for many a day to come.

Yet it should not be administratively impossible to secure a willing increment in agricultural production without either bringing the State down or going very far outside the four walls of communist dialectic. Necessarily there will be a time-lag of considerable degree between town and country in Soviet Russia, and it must be allowed for. The Russian peasant has a good hundred years to clamber over, and mechanics won't be able to do everything, when it comes to farming, by a long way. Marketing organisation will do far more than machines to woo the peasant from his ways, and win the crops desired.



# THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

by

H. L. BEALES

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- I. The Soviet Constitution
- II. The Communist Party
- III. The Party and the People
- IV. Minorities and Backward Peoples
- V. The Isolation of Russia



**I**N THIS country we are politically complacent. So enamoured are we of our political liberties, as embodied in our parliamentary and local government institutions, that we scarcely ever examine them in a qualitative, still less a quantitative, manner. We take it for granted that we are a free people, that our Parliament is the mother of a numerous progeny of similar agencies of free democratic peoples, and that if anything is wrong anywhere all that is required to set it right is a little activity on the part of our political plumbers. A historical record shows that a good deal of plumbing has had to be done since 1884 when the village labourer got to the polling-booth alongside his urban colleague. But even now that a resurrection of the royal prerogative and government through Orders in Council have knocked big holes into our quondam political system, most people seem to be unaware of what has happened. They go on assuming that the ballot-box is the agency and the symbol of that service of our fellows which is perfect freedom, even though it is patent that the centre of gravity of our public life is shifting away from the House of Commons to the scarcely discernible figures, be they anonymous financiers or equally anonymous Treasury officials or what-not outside. If a wide-awake Russian were to make the grand tour of this country as English people, great and minor, now make the grand tour of Russia, the questions he would ask and the analysis based on the answers he would receive, would result in a picture of the English political system so fresh that we should call it caricature. The only Party which ever gets analysed in the same way as the Russian Communist Party is the Labour Party: there is almost a statistical exactitude about the extent of Labour mugwumpery and the percentage in Parliament of superannuated trade union officials. A realistic description of parties and procedure and interests,



an occupational analysis of membership of our governmental bodies, local and central, a careful observation of the ways and means by which extra-parliamentary corporations influence legislation and administration, would produce surprising results. But no such analysis could go deep. It would so soon be gravelled for lack of matter that it would have to be abandoned as unproductive. And no foreign observer could ever get access to our Departments of State or to our more important officials with the freedom that is possible in Russia. It is not credulity, bred in us as that is by our political habits, which enables Socialists to find things to praise in Russia. It is, rather, the astonishing spectacle there of institutions shaped to the ends they serve and compatible with the fundamental principles of association upon which Russian society rests. To go to Russia is to be reminded of the social contract beloved of our political philosophers, and to find it an actual reality. That truly is a disconcerting experience.

#### I. THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION

There is little need at this time of day to state the fundamentals of the Soviet constitution. Everybody knows that that constitution is federal : that each constituent republic has the right of withdrawal from the Union : that certain essential branches of the common life—international relations, the defence services, transport and communications, foreign trade, the financial system, economic planning, the basic labour system, civil and criminal legislation—are in the hands of the Union, not of the separate republics : that there is an enormous and logically constructed network of representative governmental bodies. The constitution gives formal embodiment to the principles of unity and of self-determination. There is nothing untidy about it. It is clear-cut and intelligible. There is no obvious reason why it should change in form. There have been secessionist or

quasi-secessionist movements, and there are doubtless still areas in which such impulses exist, if below ground, or may come to exist. That is only to be expected. Have we not our own Scottish nationalist movement? But as every indication points to the permanence of the political system now operative in Russia, it is more useful to study behaviour than structure. There is a real as well as an apparent unity discernible in the vast agglomeration of communities and nationalities that are comprised within the framework of the U.S.S.R. The immediate revolutionary past has become the stable present, not by the mere efflux of time but by the pressure of a common purpose. The pursuance of the ultimate end has led to the shaping of effective means. There has been an abundance of inventive facility in the political field. Continuity both of purpose and of development has strengthened the belief in the validity and in the possibility of the classless society. Among those who are lending their force to the attainment of this ultimate aim there is no disillusion, even though they admit disappointments and difficulties. They are inspired by the sense of achievement, by the success of their simultaneous advance upon all fronts, political, economic, social, and ideological. "Our Riga Correspondent," who habitually tears out of their context the voluminous criticisms that are frequent in the Russian Press, produces a distortion of the real situation: his lugubrious reiterations give the outsider a sense of impending collapse. It seems likely enough that Russia will have a bad time during the winter and spring of the present year, perhaps the worst time she has had since the famine. But collapse is unthinkable. It is reasonable to expect increasing stability, and therefore to describe the behaviour of the Russian political system in terms of permanence. That permanence is due to the tenacity of the revolutionary spirit and to the clarification, with accumulating experience, of the revolutionary purpose.

The Union of Socialist Soviet Republics is a State under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The class struggle still continues and will continue for a long time to come. No

one doubts that to be a kulak or a bourgeois<sup>1</sup> is to belong to a class that has no future. No one pretends that the process of liquidation is anything but devastating to the liquidated. It is often forgotten that invasion from the outside and civil war within produced the excesses of the Red terror—in no wise different in kind from the White terror—just as inevitably as in the French Revolution the invasion of France produced there the September massacres. Even so there is no relaxation of the intention to dissipate counter-revolutionary elements in Russian society, and no willingness to make terms with the enemy that might imperil the Revolution. Complete liberty in Russia will be possible when the classless society has been attained, and it will be liberty for all. Not the liberty which is the mere absence of restraints, but the liberty which exists within a universally accepted set of restraints. The organised life of the Russian community will then have elaborated its “rule of the road” for the whole body of political activities. The present order is preliminary to that order. Common sense has rejected the view that primary needs, whether of food, shelter, and clothing, or of political and social function, should be subject to the fluctuating uncertainties of individual or class prerogative. It has demanded the elimination of inequalities so that the common will may prevail. Trite as that may sound to some, it is the necessary key to the understanding of the present régime in Russia and it is the essential preliminary to any analysis of the working of the governmental system and of its discernible tendencies.

The proletarian dictatorship of Russia is the organised power of the industrial workers in association with the humbler peasantry. The industrialisation of Russia is rapidly increasing the proportional strength of the former, and the transformation of Russian agriculture, with its establishment of State and collective farming units and its

<sup>1</sup> But see Mrs. Mitchison's chapter for the way in which a society based upon a proletarian dictatorship can make room for persons of other than proletarian origin who accept its basis and are prepared to play their part.

cumulative obliteration of the wealthier individualist farmers, is increasing the proportional strength of the latter. The friction involved in these processes is large and the processes themselves are painful. There is consequently a great deal of sabotage, which at times deranges local services and retards the development of full Communism. There has been, therefore, a very great development of the agencies which seek to repress all counter-revolutionary tendencies. The G.P.U. in its rôle of defender of the Revolution is ubiquitous and all-powerful.<sup>1</sup> But the Soviet system cannot be described, as it commonly is, solely in the negative terms of repression. There is a continuous and progressive exploration of the positive means to the attainment of the proletarian will, and this exploration is conducted through the agency of elected bodies. The franchise is exercised by the working masses, the disfranchised minority being no more than some 10 per cent. of the adult population. The Soviets of workers, peasants, and Red Army deputies, elected in their units of employment, urban and rural, are the repositories of governmental authority, and their executive committees are their agents. The local Soviets elect the Congresses of Soviets for the wider districts, and these districts for the Republic. At the apex is the Congress of Soviets of the whole U.S.S.R.

But the Soviets are not, despite their democratic structure, the determining element in the Russian political system. They are, rather, the exponents of the policy of the Communist Party. They exercise useful functions, including those of discussion, criticism, suggestion, and administration. They are essential to the adequate performance of governmental activities. But the real heart and will of the Russian political system is the Communist Party. Formerly the Communist Party exercised a condominium with the Soviets, but those days are over. It is now supreme. If it be desired to understand the present and the future policy of

<sup>1</sup> It would be a mistake, however, to regard the G.P.U. as wholly a defence force. See chapters by D. N. Pritt and Mrs. Cole for other sides of its work.

Russia, let light be sought in the programme of the Communist Party.

## II. THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Communist Party is at once the conscience of the Russian commonwealth and the main agency of its government. The term party is misleading to Englishmen because they are accustomed to a multiplicity of parties, if the various components of present-day Liberalism be reckoned in, and if, alternatively, these be reckoned as one (as they are by older people), to three parties. The party system in England has been, up to the present, a game of ins and outs, concealing an essential continuity of policy or of absence of policy. There are the makings of a Socialist Party within the Labour ranks ; but it is not yet made in any complete form, and therefore the Labour Party is not very different, is only potentially different, from the Tories and Liberals. If anyone cares to compare the Chamberlain programme of the '80's, or even the election pledges which Francis Place and other Radicals tried to extract from candidates just a century ago, with the activities of the two Labour Governments so far entrusted with office, he will rapidly discover that the Labour Party is, in spirit, organisation, and aim, a composite opportunist and many-programmed body not yet comparable with the Russian Communist Party.

The impressive thing about the Communist Party is its cast-iron discipline. This is strong both because its sense of purpose and direction is single-minded and because it is a minority in a vast public which still contains many hostile or indifferent elements. The conventional comparison is with the Society of Jesus and there is justification for it. There is nothing mystical about the C.P., but there is passion, the revolutionary passion for simplification and construction.

A film seen in Leningrad illustrated clearly the current reverence for the Party. It represented an incident in the

life-history of a confectionery works. A young Party member, secretary of the concern, was in charge of the factory's bathing-place and it was in a ruinous condition. He put up a notice forbidding its use until repairs had been effected and then went off with his just-acquired wife to their just-acquired room. The wind blew the notice down. The bathing-place was used the next morning, as was the custom, and two employees were drowned—one of them the secretary's wife. He was promptly expelled from the Party and assigned to less responsible work. This and the loss of his wife broke him. He went to pieces, giving way to drunkenness and general demoralisation. He was just going to commit suicide when he was saved and restored by the reversal of the Party decision and his re-admission to Party membership. Gone was the gloom ; gone was the torture of mind that afflicted him in the works as he fed the machine which wrapped the slabs of chocolate with wrappers that were adorned with his dead wife's picture ; gone was the refusal of his fellow-workers to assist him in his laborious task in the factory. Life had begun anew for him now that he was once more a part of the common purpose. " Too sad," said a Russian worker, as he left the theatre. " No," said his companion, " it ended happily."

The rigid discipline of the Party is not imposed for any external reason. It is as much an expression of the Communist purpose as of the revolutionary origin of Communism itself. The new world, it maintains, cannot be won, like the British Empire, in a spell of absent-mindedness. It must be built, brick by brick, in the pain and sweat of self-sacrificing labour. Hence the Party member's absolute obedience at a heavy personal cost, if circumstances demand it, to his Party's will. The thousands of students, for example, who are at present studying agricultural technique at special academies will, on the completion of their studies, be scattered all over Russia. Friendships, family relationships, the zestful life of Moscow, may have to be cast aside. I visited one of these places of instruction. The forty-year-old Party member with whom

I talked lived with her husband, his mother, and a niece in a room about twelve feet square : she studied there both her agriculture and her political and social economy, and she was ready, quite clearly, to take up her crusade in some remote country area when she had secured her qualification. There was no counting of personal costs : her work for the Revolution included that and anything else that might be demanded of her. It is impossible to think of people like that—just an ordinary commonplace example—in terms of material rewards or even, in any simple way, in terms of a power-psychology. The C.P. seems to command not only those whom, sentimentally, we describe as “careerists,” but those, too, whom we must call crusaders. The freest critic of the existing régime in Russia is the Party member, and while Party membership is undoubtedly associated with privilege, it is also beyond a peradventure associated with responsibility. There may be humbugs inside the Party, and over-zealous puritans, but the Party pace is too hard for any but the strong. There has been need lately, so rapidly does the range of responsibilities expand, for a big increase in the Party strength, and that increase has necessitated, it was said, some diminution of the periodical membership purges. The old income limitation, too, has been abandoned, so that a Communist now may receive all that he earns. But there is no sign either of a relaxation of discipline and fervour or of the segregation of Party members into a governing class. There are those who think they see these things, but the wish is father to their thought. No State has ever commanded so devoted a body of agents of its will. Religious sects in the days of their greater zeal or of their persecution may have, but not States. The English gentleman achieved in the past a certain reputation for voluntary service, but he has never lacked the incentive of social prestige and governmental career. Here in Russia is the public-school spirit without the debilitating attributes of class. There is no British Empire at the beck and call of U.S.S.R. to serve as an out-relief department for the younger sons of the aristocracy. Membership of the Party

in Russia involves the acceptance of duties and responsibilities, and it is not distributed with the rations.

Those who assisted in the denigration of the Socialist Sunday Schools a few years ago must hear with horror of the training of young Communists. They are most thoroughly disciplined, indoctrinated, and set to work. Just as Fascist Italy has turned the Italian youth movement into Fascist training camps, so has Russia organised its Pioneers and Young Communists. We have our Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, of course, and their activities include the development of loyalty to old-established institutions. In this sort of thing all communities are alike. Only the intensity and the directness of the process are greater in Russia and Italy. Visiting a forest school for incipient consumptive children a few miles out of Moscow—a school where no foreigner had been seen for several months—we found a magnificent young Communist in charge. She had drilled her band of youngsters to perfection, and she had taught them the superiorities of the Socialist over the capitalist system. They asked us volleys of questions when they had finished their drill. Were we bourgeois? Were we Communists? Would the English workers make war on the Russian workers? Was it true that children in English schools were beaten with sticks? Were there forest schools in England? Would the revolution come in England soon? . . . The impression indelibly printed on our minds was one of intense zeal and complete certainty. Here were youngsters who had imbibed the new faith. They were typical. Talk about the “cultural revolution” does not seem unreal in Russia. In all its activities and forms, the Communist Party is engaged upon the furthering of its ideal. It works with a thoroughness and a fire that leave nothing to chance. Over-zealous propaganda there doubtless has been, but it is very hard to believe that there will be any dearth of Party workers or any slackening of either faith or works in the near future.

The problem of the moment is still that of finding enough competent people to do in an intelligent way all the



multifarious tasks that the construction of the new order demands. The number of cases in which important big positions in industry or administration are occupied by men or women outside the Party is decreasing. Officers of public departments, and judges in the courts, seem invariably now to be Party members. In important industrial units, too, a considerable proportion of the personnel are Party members. The figure is as high as 40 per cent. in the Putilov works, for instance. In rural areas, and in the smaller centres generally, the proportion is low. The rapid enlargement of the Party in the last couple of years is not evidence of relaxation of the standards imposed upon new entrants or of the reduction of obligations of Party membership. It is a consequence, rather, of the growing need of reliable people in important situations, and a direct and intelligible result of the intensive training which so many millions have undergone in the last few years.

A good impression of the difficulties that this Party precedence has occasioned can be gleaned from an illuminating story that appeared in a recent issue of the central organ of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers, *Literature of the World Revolution* (No. 4 of 1931). A group of workers are teasing the chairman of the works committee. "You're not doing any real work" says one of them, who, like his fellows, did not respect this rather stupid and insignificant official. "It's a shame to say that of me," he replied. "You know I'm busy all day long." And he recited his programme of meetings. On Monday he attended meetings of the Mutual Assistance Fund, the Society for the Promotion of Self-Defence, the Aero-chemical Industry, and of the Party; on Tuesday, of the Education Committee, the Workers' Holiday Committee, and of delegates; on Wednesday, he had a political study circle, a Works Committee, an Education Committee, an Industrial Committee and a Party meeting; on Thursday, the Library Committee, the Editorial Committee of the wall newspapers, and a works conference; on Friday, "nothing much"—a conference of trade union delegates,

a meeting in the education department and a conference of the young workers ; on Saturday, only the bureau of the Communist nucleus and the Workers' Association for Aid to the Villages ; on Sunday, " a few meetings," including the co-operative delegates and the club members. There was even time for a bath on Saturday and for reading the week's papers on Sunday ! The naming of the days of the week shows that the story is retrospective, for people are ceasing to reckon time in this way. But the point is clear. The Communist does the work, he has the central position on the Russian stage, and he must be the best man available. So long as the Party remains the Revolution incarnate, so long as it keeps its present vitality and its present will, it must continue to dominate Russia. It is the effective exponent of the proletarian will to power.

How does the Party exercise its will ? It dominates the Soviets : it works through the G.P.U. : it is supreme in the Red Army. It pulls all the strings, and the strings are gathered together in the Kremlin. Doubtless it all sounds and is very " undemocratic." But that criticism is irrelevant to the Russia of to-day. The Communist Party is the unifying agent in Russian life. Be it education and the cultural revolution, or industrialisation and the economic revolution, or the defence against counter-revolution and attack from the outside, it is the Party that makes decisions and sees to their fulfilment. Its intelligence system is magnificent. It works through the G.P.U. and the Red Army as well as through its Party nuclei and its individual members. Decisions are speedily made, quickly announced, and, once taken, they are unquestioned and operative unless and until it is decided to reverse them. This realism in government is impressive. It admits of the making of mistakes, of course : what political system does not ? But the contact of government with the governed is so direct and immediate, and the acceptance of the Party as the interpreters of the Revolution is so complete, that a succession of mistakes is unlikely. Herein lies the case for the superiority of dictatorship to parliamentary democracy. Granted that the

dictatorship is the body politic in action, that it is really and truly accepted, its superiority in effectiveness, immediate and future, is beyond question. It is the only conceivable method of government for a society that aims at classlessness. It is embarrassing to the foreigner to be perpetually out of date in his information about Russia, but Russia is not yet run in the foreigner's interest.

### III. THE PARTY AND THE PEOPLE

A wrong impression would be conveyed if it were suggested that the Communist Party played the tyrant in relation to the Soviets or to the public considered individually. It has achieved its leadership through permeation. If the Soviets now, in the sphere of government, are subordinate to the Party, they are still the necessary link between it and the masses. It is a frequent complaint that the masses are apathetic in regard to elections, and the reality behind that complaint is both a sign of Party precedence and a cause of it. If there were no Communist Party, the Soviets would have to make one. In the classless society, all will be Party members. It is an old criticism of democracy, as we know it in capitalist societies, that it fails in leadership. The modern interpreters of democracy, especially such jurists as Kelsen, repudiate equality as the necessary basis of the democratic system. Short of political mysticism it is difficult to see how a political system which has not an equalitarian basis can be democratic in any sense that matters. The doctrine of trusteeship does not carry conviction, save to the trustees, in a society where some are privileged and others are not. It may be true, temporarily and on the surface, that in Russia the Communist Party, or the Politbureau at the head of it, plays the tyrant's part. It would not be true to suggest that there is a divergence of interest between the proletarian masses and Stalin and his comrades of the Politbureau who exercise power on their behalf. In the final sense, and within

the limits of the transitional proletarian dictatorship which aims at the establishment of the classless society, the present political system may be regarded as more truly democratic than the parliamentary system of this and other professedly democratic countries. Evidence of this may be found in such an institution as the R.K.I., the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate. Lenin conceived of the R.K.I. as a body which would supervise the whole machinery of the State and the Party. He evidently saw the dangers of bureaucratic inefficiency and of personal dictatorship, and consequently the need of an incorruptible institution which, in the exercise of its functions, would prevent the destruction of the Revolution through day-to-day incompetence or its betrayal through the corruption attendant upon the exercise of power. The R.K.I. can fulfil that function—unless the Communist Party, who must obviously provide its personnel, gets intoxicated with power and ceases to be the embodiment of the revolutionary aim. It has the right, of its own volition or upon suggestion from outside, to examine any body of functionaries and to report upon their performance of their duties. The R.K.I. is commonly described as “the conscience of the Communist Party,” and there is plenty of evidence that it is true to its name.

#### IV. MINORITIES AND BACKWARD PEOPLES

An acid test of the quality of the Russian governmental system is provided by its treatment of minorities and backward peoples. In this field comparative tests may be made, and the essential meaning of the Russian system may be gathered. In the U.S.S.R. there are all sorts of minorities and a considerable variety of backward races. Does the Soviet régime offer them the essentials of freedom and the opportunity of advancement? Is the record there better than that of the imperialist powers? The answer can be given with some confidence. The constitution allows, as has been often pointed out, the right of secession. But there

are positive achievements as well as this negative guarantee to record. There is nothing more discreditable in the history of Tsarist Russia and of the other powers than the persecution of the Jews. There is a long chapter of oppression in the history of all countries which had "a Jewish problem." Even now and even here in Great Britain, and still more in some other national units, hatred of the Jews persists. It is quite irrational, and is due to the conditioning of people's minds in such a way and to such an extent that they regard the Jew as in some mysterious way anti-social. There are people, very vocal people, who talk about the Jewish menace in all seriousness. The only country in the world that has made a real effort to decondition its mind—if that be the right expression—is Russia. Jew-baiting is now a mark of counter-revolutionary sympathies, and serious consequences follow any manifestation of it. So anxious are the Russians to-day to wipe out distressful memories that they have removed all barriers to Jewish participation in full Soviet citizenship. They have made it possible for Jews to scatter if they will, or to preserve their identity in their own collectives, and their own national settlement. I myself visited a Jewish *kolkhoz*, and found them successful even in the production of pigs. There is, too, the promising settlement of Bierobidjan, counterblast to the "national home" of Palestine, where a complete community, autonomous and self-sufficient, is being built up without the slightest attempt at Russification. Not only is there now no Jewish separation and no fear of pogroms; there is a complete safeguarding of Jewish culture and integrity.

The same is true of the backward peoples. They are brought into the Soviet fold not as inferior sub-human peoples, "half-devil and half-child," as a famous imperialist poet has it, but as colleagues who only need opportunity and an understanding guidance to enable them to share in the building of the classless society. There is no very obvious parallel here or elsewhere to the Institute of the Northern Peoples at Leningrad. There, some 500 students, whose ages

vary between eighteen and thirty-five, and who may be married or single, are gathered from the remoter northern regions. They are given a carefully ordered education, over a period of four or five years, and are then sent back to their homes as apostles of the new régime. They are taught in their own languages—some of which had to be reduced to writing for the first time in this institution—and their training has occupational specialisation suitable to their native environment. They obviously enjoy themselves, and equally obviously there is no element of exploitation either during or after their educational process. Some of them come from areas where wives are sold by their husbands in exchange for draught animals and where the law of the chase is the only law. They go back as apostles of the new order, and, as the new order is better than the old, they are willing apostles. Among the backward peoples of the north and elsewhere—only sheer obscurantism would deny it—there is an awakening taking place. Already, the dictatorship of the proletariat is an emancipating force among the backward races. They co-operate as equals with their colleagues in the other centres. The Soviet system is free of the charge of nationalistic exploitation, and any reader of the League of Nations' report on *Forced Labour* knows that capitalist powers are not. One cannot but assume that even in remote parts of Russia the revolution is an accepted, and a willingly accepted fact.

It would not be unfair to contrast the position of the backward peoples of the northern regions with that of the intellectuals of Leningrad and Moscow. The Soviet régime is not congenial to the bourgeois-trained intellectual or tolerant of his traditional "freedom of thought." The true Communist devotee does not understand the intellectual's love of untethered speculation. To him there is but one truth and Marx, through Lenin, was its exponent. To him the classless society is and must be the proletarian society. Strength and narrowness, for most people, must go together, and it would be fatuous to pretend that Russia can yet afford, if the Revolution is to survive, the free clash of

contrary opinions on the fundamentals of society. The present intolerance is a function of the Revolution, but it has already been softened in some respects. The proscription of religion is negative and propagandist now rather than positive and institutional. And the position of the intellectual worker is receiving a growing recognition. The status and wages of teachers and researchers have been improved, and the importance of doctors is recognised both in pay and in other important matters. Commonly, however, the habits of the intellectual are antipathetic to the proletarian outlook. They—or some of them, for there are many exceptions—do not care to use up their spare time in Party activities : they do not like their wives to enter industrial employment : they preserve an aloofness, even an attitude of somewhat arrogant superiority to factory workers. The proletarian replies by distrusting the intellectual. The Revolution would not be safe if they occupied the seat of power. Hence the friction continues, and will continue until they have acquired the proletarian outlook. Among the less attractive expressions of revolutionary fervour has been the dragooning of the writer and the pumping up of an artificial literature and drama. The impermanence of this phase is already visible, and in any case its importance has been exaggerated. The artist must always find his impulse and his theme in his social environment. The excesses will fade away and the substance will remain. Russia is still, after all, as a city besieged and she is necessarily introspective. What is easily overlooked by the outsider is the extent to which Soviet Russia is now, for various reasons, a closed system. It exists in a hostile world, and its life, in consequence, is that of the cloister. Russian thought is no narrower than that of the Catholic Church, and, in the field of science, pure and applied, it is infinitely wider. There may be, there is no room in Russia, for example, for the exponent of such “dead learning” as capitalist economics ; but in England of to-day the case is reversed, save only that here the distinction between new thought and dead tradition is so blurred that Marxian

sociology is still up to a point tolerated only as a curious aberration. All countries have their taboos, and Russia is no exception.

#### V. THE ISOLATION OF RUSSIA

It is more important at the moment to realise the effects upon Russia of her isolation than to bemoan her intolerance. She has to build her new civilisation under the most narrowing and distorting of all influences. She is cut off from the rest of the world by its fear and its hatred. She is as unlikely as it to develop mutual appreciation because she is convinced that sooner or later all must tread the Moscow road. It is hard for us who care for our own country to be tolerant of Russia's intolerance : it is hard for Russia to understand that there is a soul of goodness even in that evil thing which raided Arcos and threw over the gold standard. Russia calls to the world's proletariats, but they do not yet understand her language. The traditional manner of Russian life and the mediæval standards in which the average Russian was bred make it peculiarly hard for Westerners to bridge the gulf.

Academic discussion of constitutions and political systems does not always throw a clear light on the organised life of a community. So much depends upon the will and the spirit which animate the forms that it is idle to rely upon concrete analysis alone. In Russia to-day the prevalence of war-psychology is a fundamental factor of the common mind. Scattered here and there are posters which keep alive the feeling of encirclement by hostile powers. I have before me as I write, one that is typical of many. The Pope stands on guard before a safe, his gun bearing a crucifix instead of a bayonet. His clothing is blood-be-spattered. The safe contains the bonds of papal investments in munition-making enterprises. Another represents the Powers in conference upon the crisis, formulating the Hoover Plan : behind the opulent puppets who produce their fuddled high-sounding nothings stands—far larger



than life—the dominating figure of the Red worker. His is the power, and the future will be of his making—that is the unmistakable message of this haunting poster.

At a theatre performance of a war-propaganda play, the closing scene ran thus : Twenty-seven Russian stalwarts were defending themselves against a superior enemy force. One after the other they were killed, till at last only one remained. He, mortally wounded, spent his last strength chalking up on a face of rock a sum in simple arithmetic. The sum was

16,000,000

27

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15,999,973

Sixteen million is the number that Russia claims to be able to put in the field as a defence army. The dying warrior's last words were (as I understood them) : "What are twenty-seven ? Russia goes on." He fell back a willing sacrifice . . . then, quietly, a figure walks to the front of the stage. He turns to the audience, repeats the dead hero's last phrase, and then calls out, "Stand up, members of the Red Army." They stand. "Stand up, members of the Communist Party." "Stand up, all Komsomols." The rest of the audience remain in their seats till the curtain falls, and with the acrid smell of machine-gun fire in their nostrils, and with their nerves still jumpy from the hideous rattle of the cross-fire of the opposing forces, which the realism of this production made to rattle through the whole theatre, they can reflect upon the threatened welfare of their country.

Reflect ? It would be difficult to imagine a more powerful propagandist effort than this. Here was the war-mind in full blast, whipping the emotions and paralysing thought. As unlikeable an experience as I have ever encountered, but I could not deny the power of this means of kindling the spirit of national unity. It is useless from the depth of our comfortable arm-chairs to argue that this war-fear is

all delusion. Suppose Japan had walked through Shanghai . . . suppose the flames of war had been kindled in the Polish corridor. . . . Delusion or not, the imminence of war is an article of faith in Russia. That war is seen as a war of defence against capitalist attack. Russia is threatened—that is her view. It may be that the first elaboration of Socialism could only be carried through under the pressure of some such positive fear. But the war-mind is never a health-making factor. Not only has Russian development been retarded, by her enforced application of resources still altogether too scanty upon war preparation, but her power to breed the international mind has been reduced. Russia now is paying a heavy price for this war-fever that has been forced upon her. A part of this price is the distortion, often grotesque but always regrettably credible, of the "news" of capitalist countries and the description of them given to Russian workers: deliberate lies about ourselves will be of as little service to Russia as lies about Russia are to us. It may be that this "war propaganda" enlarges the suggestibility of the Russian people, already considerable through the speedy conquest of illiteracy. It may be that it enables the present political system to be riveted tightly upon her. But what matters is not the maintenance of this or that political régime, but the building of Socialism. Already the Socialist city that Russia has built is no mean city. How much less mean it would speedily become if it were freed from the menace of war and given the opportunity to work towards the classless society without let or hindrance.

Russia is commonly regarded as a criminal among the nations of the world. The revolutionary process is indeed an unlovely process, one in the course of which people suffer—commonly the wrong people. But an attitude towards the present régime in Russia of hatred, or pious horror or quasi-moral superiority is not very helpful. It is the less so in that its main prompting lies, at bottom, in unwillingness to admit the need of far-reaching change, especially of change which would re-assess and re-arrange the claims of

property upon society and render it more functional. It is obvious that society simply cannot carry its present property-system. What, for example, is the defence of the letting loose upon rubber plantations of parasites which will destroy them? It is obvious, too, that current patterns of behaviour and current survivals of class privilege are choking the creative impulse. Examples abound. How explain otherwise the suppression of new inventions, the sex-preoccupation of our novelists, the arterio-sclerosis of our law-courts, the spectacle of infidel scientists devising mathematical deities? People are bored. They have lost their beliefs, including their belief in Mr. Worldly-Wise-Man with his get-rich-quick programme for the happy life. Is it surprising? The old simply cannot be restored—because it is old. To look for new light, even though it turn out to be the red light, is reasonable. To find compelling the aim of the classless society, and effective the method of the proletarian dictatorship, is not to be regarded as treason. Already the habit of mere condemnation of everything Russian is out of date. Equally so is the pious belief that a crude transference to this country of the Russian revolutionary method would bring us to the gates of the New Jerusalem. It is too easily forgotten that Russia, unlike England, never really set foot upon the democratic way, and that the new proletarian presbyter is but the old autocratic priest writ large. Continuity counts in politics. For England to go a-whoring after strange Russian gods is unnecessary. Unnecessary as yet, and permanently unnecessary if we are willing to face the demands of reconstruction. Those demands must be faced, whether we call them gradualism or something else, however disturbing to established interests the facing of them may be. Our generation is called to the work of revolutionary simplification. We shall push onward in our own way in that task. And we shall build our Socialist structure more permanently and less painfully if we avoid making new religions as we go about it.

# THE RUSSIAN LEGAL SYSTEM

by

D. N. PRITT, K.C.

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- I. Description
- II. Comments
- III. Conclusions and Recommendations



## I. DESCRIPTION

I HAVE studied the law and justice of Soviet Russia to some extent from the literature that is available, but I have attached far more value to the investigations which I have made personally in Russia. I saw there a number of different courts at work, visited several penal establishments and received reports from two of my fellow-investigators on their visits to establishments which I was unable to reach ; I had also long and confidential discussions with judges, advocates, procurators, and high officials of the Ministry of Justice (some of whom were lawyers under the old régime and some of whom were not), as well as with foreign students of the Russian system. (Among these last was Mr. Judah Zelitch of the Pennsylvania Bar, who has devoted over four years to a close investigation of the practical working of the system ; to him, as well as to his book *The Soviet Administration of Criminal Law*, I owe a considerable debt of gratitude.)

My investigations have given me a general view of the history of law and justice in Russia since 1917, of the system as it now is, and of the developments anticipated in the near future. It embraces, of course, many elements of compromise between revolutionary ideals and practical difficulties ; whilst it may well undergo further changes, it is stable and well balanced, and for the purposes of this report it will be sufficient to describe it as it now stands, without discussing its past or its future.

### *The Courts and their Jurisdiction*

The courts can be shortly described. U.S.S.R. is of course a federation of States ; The Union itself has but few courts, the States supplying most of the judicial machinery, as is the case in Canada.

Each of the seven constituent States or republics (R.S.F.S.R., Uk.S.S.R., and five others), has a complete system of courts, into which are woven also the courts of the numerous autonomous republics and autonomous territories. It will be enough in this report to describe merely the courts of the Union and of R.S.F.S.R. (the largest of the seven republics, comprising indeed nearly three-quarters of the population of Soviet Russia).

U.S.S.R. has only two, or perhaps three, courts. The first, the Supreme Court, has power to review by way of supervision (a system explained on p. 153 hereof) the judgments of the Supreme Courts of the seven constituent republics ; it has original jurisdiction (which it has never yet been called upon to exercise), over disputes between constituent republics ; and it exercises criminal jurisdiction in rare cases involving either persons of high position or charges of exceptional importance ; by its military department it also exercises original jurisdiction over military officers of high rank, or exceptionally important charges against military defendants, as well as cassational<sup>1</sup> jurisdiction over the decisions of the military courts.

The Supreme Court has, strictly speaking, no other judicial functions ; but the plenum (that is to say, the general meeting) of the court, consisting of the president, the deputy president, the three departmental presidents, four of the ordinary judges of the court selected for the purpose, and the president of the supreme court of each of the constituent republics, issues explanations and interpretations of law and of legislation, and exercises certain limited powers of review both over the acts and decrees of the central executive committees (the ostensible seats of direct executive and legislative power) of the constituent republics, and over the decisions of their supreme courts.

<sup>1</sup> Cassation is the quashing or setting aside of proceedings in a lower court for some informality or irregularity, as opposed to appeal, which is in theory a re-hearing. In Russia there is technically no appeal ; but the grounds of cassation are so wide both in definition and in practical application that the distinction is immaterial.

Then there come the Military Courts of U.S.S.R., which normally have jurisdiction over members of the Red Army only, and then only in respect of acts alleged to threaten the safety of the Red Army, or military discipline ; they have, however, general jurisdiction over all persons in cases of emergency, when the ordinary courts cease to function.

The G.P.U., the State Political Police, the only central police force in U.S.S.R., must also be mentioned here, since it exercises certain judicial functions. It has criminal jurisdiction, strictly defined and limited by legislation, in cases the trial whereof in public might disclose confidential information, and it thus constitutes, in strictness, one more federal court.

The courts of R.S.F.S.R. are of course more numerous and elaborate. The general primary court of first instance is the People's Court, which has a substantial but limited jurisdiction at first instance in both civil and criminal cases, corresponding roughly to that of county courts and police courts in England.

The next court above the People's Court is in some cases the Provincial Court, and in other cases (namely, where for local government purposes the old provinces have been re-arranged into smaller districts called regions) the Circuit Court, with above that a Regional Court. The Provincial Court has unlimited jurisdiction at first instance in civil and criminal cases which are beyond the People's Court limit, and also has cassational jurisdiction over decisions of the People's Court. The Provincial Court has also the power of "review by way of supervision" and the general administrative duty of supervising the operation of all judicial institutions in the province, in actual practice a very busy and important function. In addition, the Provincial Court, by its plenum (the general meeting of all the judges of the court), has the duty of deciding points of law arising in litigation and referred to the plenum by any sitting of the court. (Russia has succeeded in avoiding "case-law" ; cases are reported to a small extent, but it is forbidden to cite them as authority.)



Where the Provincial Court has been replaced by the Regional and Circuit Court, adding as it were one story to the judicial structure, the jurisdictions are *mutatis mutandis* the same, the Circuit Court having original jurisdiction wider than that of the People's Court, but not unlimited, and cassational jurisdiction over the People's Court, and the Regional Court standing in a similar position above the Circuit Court.

Above the Provincial or the Regional Court, as the case may be, comes the Supreme Court of R.S.F.S.R., with, in substance, three branches of jurisdiction: interpretative, cassational, and original. In the first, the plenum of the court is the final interpreter in the republic on all questions of law and procedure, at the instance of litigants, Government departments, the procuracy (see p. 159), or the presidium (a committee of the judges) of the Supreme Court. In its cassational jurisdiction, it gives decisions on matters brought up from Provincial or Regional Courts, which decisions are final unless the president of the court or the procurator brings the point of law involved before the plenum of the court. (The decisions of the cassational division of the Provincial or Regional Court are final, unless the Supreme Court exercises its powers of "review by way of supervision" at its own instance or that of the procurator of the republic.) The original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is confined to cases involving specific persons (e.g. judges of the Supreme Court, or procurators), and cases specially referred to it for trial owing to the importance of the subject-matter.

There is little in the way of special courts in R.S.F.S.R. Disputes between Government departments and certain other organisations are sent to arbitration, and a tendency is shown to deal with cases of a technical character (e.g. violations of the labour code, and transport and naval questions) by selecting co-judges, (see p. 151) with technical knowledge.

There are also Children's Courts, which are under the Ministry of Education, not that of Justice. These work

extremely well, as may be expected in a community which in a few short years wholly cured the appalling problem of the "homeless children."

### *The Judges*

The staffing of the courts has now to be considered. The judges are, as in most European countries, Civil Servants under the Ministry of Justice and are not normally appointed from among the advocates, as in England. They virtually never sit singly, and never with juries. Almost without exception, every trial court in R.S.F.S.R. consists of a permanent judge and two co-judges, and every cassational court, of three permanent judges.

The permanent judge is permanent in the sense that he is a whole-time professional judge ; he is elected for a year, being frequently re-elected from year to year, and is paid a salary nominally equal to the earnings of the rather more highly paid workmen. The co-judges are drawn from a panel drawn up annually ; they each sit for about six days a year only, and their remuneration merely covers loss of earnings. They are in substance laymen, although it is part of the duty of the permanent judge to explain their duties carefully to them, and they often attend conferences or lectures designed to assist them in understanding their work. All questions of law and of fact are decided by a majority of the three judges sitting, so that in theory the two laymen can overrule the permanent professional judge.

The methods of appointment are as follows :

In the People's Court, the permanent judges are elected by the provincial executive committee, or in certain cities by the Soviet of the city, the election being thus popular but indirect ; the candidates are nominated in the first instance by the Provincial Court or the Ministry of Justice. Election is for one year, but the judges are subject to recall even within that year, with the sanction of the Ministry, if judicial proceedings have been taken against them for breaches of duty. The co-judges in the People's Court are selected by a

special commission formed of one member of the county executive committee, one assistant procurator, and one people's judge, who check over a list of candidates elected in prescribed numbers by general meetings of factories, villages and similar bodies.

The judges of the Provincial Courts are elected by the provincial executive committee, subject to the approval of the Ministry of Justice, which has the right also to nominate candidates. They are elected for one year only and are subject to recall as in the case of the judges of the People's Court.

The selection of co-judges for the Provincial Court is somewhat elaborate. The qualification is two years' experience in certain State, social, or professional organisations ; a list is selected, from those persons who are qualified, by a commission consisting of one member of the provincial executive committee, two judges of the Provincial Court, one member of the provincial procuracy, and three delegates from the provincial Soviet of trade unions, and that list is sanctioned by the provincial executive committee, which strikes out (without appeal) any name of which it disapproves.

In the Regional and Circuit Courts, the methods of appointment are substantially similar to those of the Provincial Courts.

In the Supreme Court of R.S.F.S.R., the president, the deputy-president, and the presidents of the various departments are appointed directly by the presidium of the Central Executive Committee, and the remaining judges by the same committee on the presentation of the Ministry of Justice with the assent of the president of the court. The co-judges are drawn from a special list of forty-eight approved by the presidium of the Central Executive Committee.

The judges of the Supreme Court of U.S.S.R. and of the military courts are appointed directly by the presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Union. The co-judges of the Supreme Court are taken from a special list,

and in no case does more than one co-judge, instead of the usual two, figure among the three judges sitting.

The qualifications for appointment to judicial positions vary according to the different positions ; they include the possession of the franchise and previous service for varying periods in various positions in the judicial hierarchy.

### *Review of Decisions*

Side by side with the provisions as to cassation, there exists a somewhat remarkable power in the courts to reverse or modify erroneous decisions of lower courts through " review by way of supervision." At any stage of a case, however early, or however late (even after cassation is barred by lapse of time, and when a case has long been finally concluded in the inferior court), the president or the procurator of a court can call on any inferior court to produce the record of any case, and can then examine the whole proceedings and if necessary set aside the decision itself, or any preliminary step or decision. The central authorities have a similar power.

Whilst this procedure often enures to the benefit of the individual litigant or accused, and in many cases is in fact brought into exercise as a result of complaints by him, it is primarily the power and right of the court itself, and is designed to act as an additional weapon to secure the efficient and impartial working of the courts in the public interest. The procedure is constantly invoked, and leads directly to the correction of wrong verdicts, and indirectly, no doubt, to much greater efficiency and vigilance.

### *Preliminary Enquiry*

The method of preliminary enquiry into criminal charges is interesting and important. In explaining it, one can show, too, how Russia differentiates in procedure between minor and serious offences. Criminal cases vary in seriousness, and all cases do not call for the same degree of preparation. In England, the difference between the more simple and the more elaborate cases is this : that the more simple begin

and end in the police courts, being tried out then and there by the justices or the stipendiary magistrate, whilst the more elaborate cases begin equally in the police court with what looks like a trial, but is in truth only a judicial investigation of the question whether there is a *prima-facie* case for trial or not, but go on to the real trial at assizes or quarter sessions if a *prima-facie* case be found. In Russia, the virtual double trial is avoided, without any injustice to the accused, by the adoption of a somewhat different system. The case, if fit for trial at all, is tried once and once only, but in the more simple cases, and in them only, the preliminary enquiry is omitted. The rule is that all charges of certain defined crimes, and all other charges which the court, or the procurator, or the investigator himself, thinks sufficiently serious, are made the subject of preliminary enquiry, leaving the remainder, the minor cases, to go on without preliminary enquiry.

The preliminary enquiry, which supersedes the early investigations of the police, takes place in private, and is conducted by a judicial officer called an investigator. No judge is present, and the accused cannot be legally represented ; but he is not compelled to give evidence, and it is emphatically laid down, and great efforts are made to ensure, that the investigation must be completely impartial, directed not merely to ascertaining what can be said for the prosecution, but to eliciting all relevant facts, in whatever direction they tend. Statements of all relevant witnesses, including experts, searches of premises and property, subject to proper safeguards, and in general every possible line of investigation (subject at every stage to an appeal to the procurator by any person affected), are all designed to result in a very full investigation and the preparation of a summary history of the case, with a view to deciding whether it should go to trial and, if so, to having it fully prepared for trial.

This enquiry naturally begins, in many cases, before any person is accused ; so soon as a definite case against anyone emerges, a document called by the rather misleading

name of "decision" (in effect a charge), is drawn up and he is summoned to attend and has it read to him. If at the end of the enquiry the investigator regards the case as a proper one to be tried, he so informs the accused, and tells him that he has the right to see the record and to ask for any additional witnesses to be examined. When the accused has exercised this right so far as he desires, the investigator draws up an "accusatory conclusion," which is in substance a history or "brief" of the whole case; this is submitted to the procurator of the court, who, if he thinks the case proper to be tried, sets it down for hearing. The accused and his advocate from that moment have full access to the record and the right to take copies of any part of it; a copy of the accusatory conclusion itself has to be delivered in any case to the accused three days before the hearing.

It is also part of the investigator's duty to supervise the working of the "organs of investigations," that is to say, of the local police (*milizia*) and similar bodies, who make the early investigations into any occurrence and are superseded by the investigator, as above described, so soon as it appears that there is ground for a definite preliminary enquiry.

It should be noted that, for the investigation of certain crimes, the G.P.U. is given the powers of an investigator.

### *Trial*

In essentials, trial in Russia is not dissimilar from trial elsewhere in Europe; but there are, of course, interesting features worth description, both in respect of the trial itself and of the position of the accused.

The actual conduct of proceedings in court is either in the hands of the procurator or one of his officers, or at times in the hands of some member of a voluntary "institute for public prosecution," or else the case is conducted without anyone appearing for the prosecution. The somewhat more prominent part taken in the proceedings by the presiding judge (a feature, of course, of many European

countries), and the great detail in which the case is prepared by the investigator, render this quite workable.

The trial begins with the reading of the accusatory conclusion, and proceeds thereafter in much the same order as in England, the presiding judge, as already stated, taking a more active part. He generally examines a witness briefly before the advocates for prosecution or defence ; but they are at liberty when their time comes to question the witness freely and directly, and not by putting questions only through the judges, as in some countries. The accused is not bound to testify, but if he does so he may well find himself subject to very full cross-examination by the court. The accused's advocate has in all cases the right to the "last word," and, after all the speeches have been concluded, the accused personally, even if represented by an advocate, is entitled to address the court. Rules of evidence in the English sense are non-existent, the only limitation on the evidence adduced being that it must have some bearing on the questions in issue, including therein the motive for the crime, and anything in the history of the accused which would have any bearing on the punishment to be awarded if he should be found guilty.

Cassational hearings begin by one of the judges reading a full report on the case ; advocates are often not present, although they have a right to appear (except in the Supreme Court) in cases where they appeared below.

Reviews by way of supervision are dealt with either by the cassational department of the court or by the plenum.

### *Rights of the Accused*

Although the true position of accused persons in any country depends rather on the spirit in which the law is administered than on the bare provisions of that law, it will be as well to state here the legal position of accused persons in respect of arrest and imprisonment before trial, the right to an advocate, and similar points.

On the matter of arrest, the law is not generally dissimilar from that of England, although free from many

technicalities, such as the difference between felony and misdemeanour ; on the whole, the right to arrest is more limited than it is in England. The majority of accused persons are not kept in custody whilst waiting trial, undertakings to appear, with or without some form of financial backing, being commonly accepted in somewhat the same manner as bail, but with greater freedom. An accused person cannot be held in custody at all unless the offence charged is punishable with at least one year's imprisonment and, in addition, there is ground to fear that his being at large will hinder the discovery of the truth.

An important consideration is, of course, the question of delay in bringing cases to trial. This is dealt with in Russia (which is curing itself comparatively rapidly of an Asiatic indifference to time) by decrees imposing short time-limits within which cases must be disposed of, counting from the beginning of the preliminary enquiry. These limits are often exceeded, and administrative pressure is brought upon the courts and officers to ensure that they are better kept.

The right of an accused to employ an advocate in preparing for trial and at the trial, at his own expense, whether the prosecution is represented or not, is universal and unqualified, except in the Provincial and Regional Courts, where it lies in the discretion of the court. The right of the accused to have an advocate allotted to him free, for the same purposes, when the prosecution is represented, is, with the same exception, universal and unqualified. In the People's Court, the accused must be expressly informed of his rights in this respect.

The advocate has always the right to interview his client freely, whether he be in custody or not, as well as to inspect and copy the record, as above stated.

Whilst advocates are not universally popular, the Provincial and Regional Courts do not often exercise either the power to exclude them or the power which they also possess to exclude a particular advocate from a particular case. The power to disallow the final speeches, which



naturally affects the defence (which has the last word) more than the prosecution, is equally possessed by these two courts, and is equally not often exercised. Whilst the effect of this sort of restriction, as already suggested, depends more on the spirit in which the court exercises its powers than on the letter of the power (and the spirit of the court will be discussed below—see p. 171), it may be mentioned that in a court in which cases are so thoroughly prepared before the hearing that the prosecution is often unrepresented, in which the presiding judge takes a prominent and unbiased part at the hearing, and in which the whole atmosphere is such as to make even the accused feel at ease, the absence of an advocate is not so serious as it is in most English courts.

### *The Advocates*

The advocates' profession in Russia is not and never has been divided into two branches ; and the advocate plays a less prominent part in litigation than he does in England. The simplicity of the procedure ; the greater thoroughness in criminal cases of the preparatory work done before the case comes to court ; the absence of rules of evidence and of similar technicalities ; the greater certainty of the law arising from the absence of a vast fungus of reported cases ; the freedom from all the hindrances that excessive wealth on one side or the other can place in the way of justice,—all tend to make it less essential to employ an advocate. Nevertheless, advocates are frequently employed, and the organisation of the profession is interesting. With a few " old-fashioned " exceptions that can be ignored, everyone qualified to be an advocate—by two years' service in the Soviet judiciary in a position not below that of an investigator, or by passing through the Institute of Soviet Law (see p. 165) or by taking evening classes after working at a factory or elsewhere in the daytime, and then passing an examination by the collegium—joins the " collegium " of advocates. He or she will then be selected by a litigant, civil or criminal, or more often appointed by the " consultation

bureau," to which those in need of legal advice apply, to act for any particular litigant ; the litigant will pay fees, or be relieved from payment, according to his position, but any fees paid will go to the collegium, and each advocate will receive from the funds of the collegium a monthly salary varying according to his or her abilities.

Ordinary discipline over advocates is exercised by the presidium of the collegium, with an appeal to the disciplinary department of the Provincial or Regional Court ; but they are liable, as are the judges (see p. 151), in theory at any rate, to suspension, disqualification, or even to prosecution, for various kinds of breaches of duty in the course of conducting their clients' cases. This seems strange to English lawyers, although English laymen may find it extremely refreshing ; but the important question is whether it makes any difference in practice to the conduct of a case. So far as can be judged, advocates are able to present their client's cases freely and fearlessly ; in particular, one of the most eminent advocates, who had appeared for many persons accused of counter-revolutionary activities, stated that he never felt the least embarrassment or difficulty in presenting his case as strongly as he thought fit. (In common with some 85 per cent. of his fellow-advocates, he was not a member of the Communist Party.)

### *The Procuracy*

One important feature of Russian legal procedure which as yet has hardly been mentioned is the procuracy. " Procurator " suggests a public prosecutor, or at the most an attorney-general in an English system ; but the Russian procurator, whilst he certainly is a public prosecutor and something of an attorney-general, has much wider and more important duties than either. He is entrusted with the general duty of supervising in the public interest the operation of all Government organs, in the widest sense of the phrase, and to enable him to fulfil this duty he is placed in a position of virtual independence of all departments,

although he is linked with the Ministry of Justice by the Procurator of the Republic, being also the Deputy Minister of Justice.

Among his duties are to protest to the executive against any legislation which he considers to be against the true interest of the public, and to suggest its repeal or amendment ; and to watch the activities of, and if necessary to institute proceedings (criminal, disciplinary, or administrative) against, judges, investigators, advocates, and other officials of all kinds. In connection with judicial proceedings, the procurators and assistant procurators attached to the various courts institute prosecutions, supervise preliminary enquiries, decide whether cases should go for trial or not, and appear when necessary to conduct cases at trial (being then, and then only, subject to the court, and not independent). The procurator also when necessary participates in civil trials, " to safeguard the interests of the State and of the toiling masses."

It is not an uninteresting feature of the procurator's divers duties that he is particularly active in connection with prison administration. He has to see that sentences are properly carried out, that any persons unlawfully detained are released, and that prisons are properly managed. He visits prisons regularly, generally as often as once in six days, and receives and investigates complaints by individual prisoners. The public are earnestly encouraged to take their complaints to this active and powerful organisation, and they are not slow to do so.

The procuracy of U.S.S.R. is as important in its own sphere as that of R.S.F.S.R. ; it deals with questions of interpretation of laws and legislation, and many other matters, including the supervision of the activities of the G.P.U. ; one of the assistant procurators of the Union is permanently stationed in the offices of the G.P.U., in order properly to fulfil this duty.

### *Prisons and Prisoners*

The sentences imposed by the trial courts include

solemn reprimands, fines, probation, compulsory labour (a system whereunder the convicted person continues in freedom and works at his regular work, but is compelled to hand over to the Government a large part of his earnings), and imprisonment. Terms of imprisonment are on the average shorter than in England, and the treatment of prisoners is one of the most remarkable features of the whole system. The Russians apply fully and logically the theory that imprisonment must be reformatory, and not in the smallest degree punitive ; and they regard society as sharing with the criminal the responsibility for his crime. They speak of "social correction," not of "punishment," and they succeed in creating in their penal establishments a very striking atmosphere of co-operative endeavour to effect a real cure of bad habits and a full restoration to the normal life of society and to the rights of citizenship.

The prisons are of several types, most of which should not be, and are not in practice, called prisons at all, being in the nature either of open or semi-open camps or fully open communes or colonies. The closed prison, housed in pre-Revolutionary prison buildings of the type with which Western Europe is familiar, is still in use for some of the more difficult prisoners, although this kind of treatment will, it is expected, be a thing of the past in a few years. But, even in these prisons, conditions are very different from those of England. Many circumstances combine to render humane and progressive prison treatment an easy matter, even in such old-fashioned buildings : the real feeling of equality between one citizen and another, whether he be warder or prisoner ; the complete absence of any of the problems that in the unemployment countries obstruct all efforts to find work for prisoners or to market their products ; the knowledge that every prisoner on leaving can find work at once ; and the fact that the labour of the prisoners can make the prison virtually self-supporting, and so largely eliminate the bugbear of "economy,"—all these provide a foundation on which a humane administration can build more hopefully. Full advantage is taken of

these circumstances ; the Russian principle of self-government is applied completely, and within limits the prisoners control their own lives, impose penalties on each other for minor prison offences, and manage their own varied recreations. There is none of the restriction and futility created by the over-regimented life of so many English prisoners, who have no really useful work to occupy their days and brood endless hours locked in their cells : with the Russians, even in closed prisons, a seven- or eight-hour day of normal factory work at normal wages in the prison factory, with games, education, gymnastics, wireless, lectures, books, amateur dramatic performances by the prisoners, the editing, and no doubt the reading, of the prison newspaper, in the leisure hours ; unrestricted intercourse with other prisoners and with the guards ; the right to smoke freely at all times except when at work ; a generous allowance of visits and a virtually unrestricted and uncensored writing and reception of letters ; often week-end holidays and almost always a fortnight's summer holiday,—all combine to make prison-life, however hard, at least not a thing so unlike the life of the free man as to constitute at once a long mental torture and a definite impairment of the capacity for normal life.

Some of the prisons are mixed prisons, and there are not a few women prisoners. It is a commonplace of life in closed prisons that prisoners act as minor warders, and that a woman prisoner with a young baby, who prefers to keep it at her home rather than in the prison crèche, is allowed to go home several times a day to feed it ; and one prison newspaper (a publication distributed regularly to a number of prisons, with a circulation of about 20,000) contained an article by one of the prisoners, pillorying some of the warders "for having forgotten that a prison is not for punishment, but for reformation." Flowers, pictures, and photographs can be seen in many cells.

As has already been observed, the procuracy regularly inspects prisons and receives complaints from prisoners. Prisoners in most closed prisons are also regularly examined

by psychiatrists, and removed to mental hospitals for treatment whenever necessary. Solitary confinement is very rare, and is imposed for short periods only for serious infractions of prison discipline.

When the time comes for release, the almost complete absence of any prison "stigma," coupled with the still urgent need for skilled workers in many industries, leads to an actual demand by factories to be supplied with men leaving this or that prison with a certificate of skill and good character. The result is that recidivism sinks to negligible proportions, 20 per cent. being regarded as quite disappointingly large.

After-care, in such circumstances, is virtually superfluous, but it is not uncommon for the officials to keep in touch with discharged prisoners in the factories to which they have gone, and to use influence to secure for them the still priceless boon of good housing accommodation.

So much for the hardest and most old-fashioned type of prison. The open or semi-open camp is in many ways better than this ; but the modern type of labour commune, of which eight are already at work, is far more remarkable and constitutes one of the most encouraging phenomena of modern Russia. Here criminals with several serious convictions live and work in large villages completely indistinguishable from any other village, with nothing to prevent their departure (one could not call it escape) save the likelihood that they will not be allowed to return, and with the quiet encouragement to reform that comes from decent surroundings and the prospect of regaining their citizenship. True, they must be "home" by 11 p.m. ; they can have no intoxicants ; they cannot marry without the leave of their own general meeting ; and they have, for the time being, lost their citizenship and their right to belong to a trade union ; but that is the end of any distinction between themselves and their unconvicted comrades. Small wonder that in such a "prison" a substantial part of the population consists of men and women who, having purged their offences, regained their citizenship and rejoined

the Communist Party, nevertheless prefer to continue living in the "prison," bringing up their children in the surroundings which have helped themselves back to normal life, and decorating the sitting-rooms of their homes with framed diplomas of their own restoration to citizenship. Small wonder, even, that a high official of the Ministry of Justice spent three months in one of the "prisons" as an ordinary inmate, to see how he liked it.

### *Legal Education*

Legal education presents interesting features in Russia. Here more than in most matters of law one is driven to realise how young the country is. Fifteen years ago, the Revolution had hardly started; ten years ago, the more acute difficulties of the early years had hardly been surmounted. In those fifteen, or ten, years, a country which had lost virtually the whole of its pre-Revolutionary bar and judicature has had to establish and operate an elaborate judicial system which, in judges, co-judges, procurators, investigators, advocates, and central officials, employs or engages hundreds of thousands of people in tasks which, however much they be simplified, remain essentially difficult and technical. To give an illustration of the difficulties involved, one may point out by way of comparison that in England to-day there is no professional judge who began his legal training less than twenty years ago, and hardly a barrister or solicitor of established practice who did not begin his studies before U.S.S.R. was born.

Revolutionary Russia, of course, attaches as great importance to legal as to other education. It looks forward to the time when all its legal officers (investigators, procurators, advocates, and judges) will have been professionally trained in its law schools, and meanwhile it bridges the gap by encouraging its judges and other officials to study law wherever and whenever they can, and by encouraging the reappointment of its judges from year to year. (Already, 50 per cent. of the permanent judges in the Regional

Courts have been fully professionally educated.) The education is given, not at the general universities, but in a number of specially established "Institutes of Soviet Law" (under the Ministry of Justice, not the Ministry of Education), where long and thorough courses cover, not merely specifically legal subjects, but also many others, such as political economy, sociology, and foreign languages.

### *Litigation and Law*

A few words may be written about the subject-matter of litigation and the substantive law. These vary less from what prevails in capitalist countries than might be expected. The relations between factory and workman, between one factory and another, between trusts, Government limited companies, and other organisations, however different fundamentally from relations between private organisations performing or seeking to perform similar functions in capitalist countries, are superficially subject to similar law, as they are to similar accountancy principles; and, in the absence of *droit administratif* in the French sense, any dispute arising out of such relations is disposed of in the ordinary courts in the ordinary way (although disputes between two Government departments are sent to arbitration). Many features of the political system, no doubt, assist to diminish greatly the volume of civil litigation (indeed, one high official of the Ministry of Justice expressed his belief that all litigation, civil or criminal, would disappear within the next six or seven years, an estimate which others thought to be "much too short"), but its nature remains much the same. In the same way, the substantive law is relatively little altered; the law of contract stands much where it did, leaving the differences of the new era to manifest themselves in the personality of the contracting parties, the subject-matter of the contract, and the relative honesty of fulfilment, rather than in the law itself. The law of patents, to take another example, instead of disappearing, has merely taken a more socially useful form, and a Government limited company that cannot trade without loss is



wound-up as simply as a limited company with similar misfortune in England.

### *Supervision and Control*

One of the more interesting features of Soviet organisation generally is the complete and thorough provision for holding all officials, regardless of position, responsible, if necessary criminally, for any neglect of duty. In the case of the judicial system, in addition to the administrative control by Provincial or Regional Courts of the working of inferior courts, and the wide activities of the procuracy, it is laid down that the president of any court may bring before the court, on any charge, anyone but the procurator or his assistant, and the procurator may bring before the court anyone but the president or his deputy ; whilst the disciplinary department of the Supreme Court can deal with any judicial person (with the rarest possible exceptions) or any advocate. The offences with which this department can deal include the rendering of a " verdict or decision in plain contravention of the general spirit of the law of R.S.F.S.R. and the interest of the toiling masses," if the verdict has already been reversed by the Supreme Court. The penalties inflicted by this disciplinary department are not serious, but they go, in the case of an advocate, as far as suspension for six months. In addition, that remarkable body, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, which is established to investigate and criticise every organ of Government, can and does turn its attention equally to judicial organs—subject, however, to this limitation, that it must not interfere with the actual conduct or decision of any case, whether pending or already finished.

### *The Relation of the Courts to the Executive*

In theory, at any rate, the relation of the courts to the Executive is fundamentally different in Russia to what it is in England. The Russian courts are a mere branch of the Executive, being technically a completely subordinate part of the Ministry of Justice, whereas in England they are

theoretically wholly independent. This difference, vital in theory, is probably of little importance in practice. It is no doubt true that the Russian courts reflect the outlook and philosophy of the present Russian Government ; but the courts of every country, however independent theoretically, reflect equally truly the outlook of the class from which the judges and the Executive are drawn. A display of real independence by the courts against the Executive Government is not likely to be met with in any country, unless and until a situation arises in which old courts, reflecting the outlook of an old Government system, survive for a time a fundamental political change.

## II. COMMENTS

Apart from any features due to revolutionary theory or philosophy (which, it may be remarked, do not strike the foreign observer as its most outstanding features), there is much in the Russian legal system to shock the conventional English lawyer or even the layman. More than half the judges have had no formal professional training ; they are liable to lose their posts at the end of any year, and may be prosecuted for breach of duty ; they are modestly paid, and are popularly, if indirectly, elected ; and in any trial they may be out-voted by lay co-judges. Advocates in their turn have not the striking theoretical independence of their English colleagues. These differences are not, however, necessarily a condemnation of the Russian system, on which it is now time to comment.

### *Simplicity of Procedure*

An outstanding feature of present-day Russian litigation, civil or criminal, is its simplicity. Simplicity, which many think so easy to achieve, is in fact regarded by English lawyers as a matter of extreme difficulty, and every attempt so far made in modern England to simplify law or

procedure, at any rate in the more expensive fields of litigation, has resulted mainly in increased uncertainty and expense. Simplicity is, however, achieved beyond question in Russian legal procedure. In court after court one can see questions of all shades of complexity and importance being disposed of with ease, but no confusion, with brevity, but no haste ; litigants, judges, advocates, witnesses, all take part freely, without restraint or feeling of superiority or the reverse, in the straightforward and untechnical disposal of the matters in issue. There seems to be no reason to suppose that many errors are caused by this simplicity. Decisions are challenged by way of cassation or review to an extent which, when allowance is made for the cheapness of procedure, is no more than that prevailing in the English courts, and the percentage of decisions upset is only slightly in excess of the English rate. With a few more years' experience, and a more fully educated judiciary and bar, the Russian efficiency rate will certainly be much higher.

### *The System of Co-Judges*

What must be said of the system of co-judges ? Are they better or worse than judges and jury ? Would a single-judge system be preferable. Or two or three permanent judges, without laymen ? Or ought the permanent judge to have at any rate the right to decide questions of law without interference from his or her co-judges ? The system as it stands is of course the fruit of compromise between the desire, on the one hand, to staff the courts with judges of the best possible professional qualifications, and the sense, on the other hand, of the importance of maintaining the popular or proletarian atmosphere of the court—of securing, in a word, that men shall truly be tried by their peers. (No one who has not watched a "litigant in person" struggling to conduct his case in the artificial atmosphere of an English court can realise the overwhelming aid to justice that is automatically given by merely making the common citizen feel "at home" in a court.)

The system, indeed, involves a further compromise between

the view that a jury is a desirable instrument of "popularity" and the view that it is not ; but, on the best judgment that one can form, the system appears to be the happiest possible instance of successful compromise. It wastes little time ; it cannot result, like so many jury trials, in a disagreement ; and it renders it impossible either to secure a verdict by a mere appeal to jury prejudice, or to advance with any confidence a technical argument likely to appeal to a professional lawyer but certain to antagonise anyone who is more than half a layman. In practice, moreover, little friction seems to arise between judges and co-judges either in connection with questions of law or with those of fact.

It would seem to an English lawyer that the system could in any case be improved by leaving questions of law to the sole judgment of the permanent judge ; but it generally happens in practice that the views of the permanent judge prevail on legal questions, and there are some advantages both in retaining the full equality of the three and in relieving the court of having occasionally to decide the difficult problem whether a particular question is in truth one of law or one of fact.

On the whole, it must be concluded that in this respect too the Russian legal system has justified itself.

### *The Position of Accused Persons*

The position of an accused person, both in respect of his procedural rights and of the attitude of the court, calls for a few comments. It has already been seen that in theory his or her position is not substantially different from the position of accused persons in England ; but the attitude of the court and the actual working of the procedure are of course the crucial considerations. It is a matter not simple to determine ; on the one hand, it is easy to quote the writings of one or two distinguished Soviet authorities which suggest that accused persons should be somewhat summarily treated ; and, on the other hand, one may rely with comfort on experience of the extreme patience and

fairness with which courts can be seen every day to treat, not only accused persons, but persons who, having pleaded guilty, have merely to be justly sentenced. On the whole, it is clear that accused persons not charged with "political" offences receive at least as fair a trial as accused in other countries that pride themselves on their criminal judicature; and even with regard to those accused of "political" offences there seems to be no ground for assuming that the courts, however much they may view with anxiety crimes against the safety of the Soviet State, forget that the accused person may not be guilty of the offence, and must not be so regarded until his guilt has been fairly proved. The favourable impressions which I formed on this point were confirmed to me by persons well qualified to form an unbiased judgment and in a position to express it freely.

*The Dependence of the Judges on the Executive*

Another not too simple matter on which some comment should be attempted is the question how far the dependence of the judges on the Executive, and the emphatic political complexion and strength of that Executive, subject the courts to pressure which may be exercised against politically unpopular sections of the community. One can cite declarations of important Russians to the effect that this is and should be the case; and can then counter them with assurances from others, having no motive to conceal the facts, to the reverse effect. (And, of course, in no country in Europe, however stable and apparently liberal the régime under which it is governed, are the courts free from similar pressure, whether direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious.)

The answer to the problem is to be found less in the formal dependence or independence of courts than in the whole political atmosphere; and whilst one cannot feel confident, in any country in the world, that the courts will give the same fair treatment to certain classes whose political views are in direct conflict with those of the Government or the governing class as they will to others,

the courts of present-day Russia appear to be a great deal better than those of many other countries, and not much inferior to those of the most liberal.

### *The Spirit of the Courts*

A few words should be written in conclusion on the spirit displayed by the Russian courts in their day-to-day work. On this it is almost impossible to use moderate language ; and the contrast appeals perhaps more strongly to an Englishman than to, say, a Dane. In England, most cases of any importance come before a judge who, however anxious he may be to administer impartial and understanding judgment, suffers from three grave handicaps : in the first place, he has spent the best years of his life in practice in that branch of the legal profession which is protected by its organisation and etiquette from direct contact with the life of the everyday man ; in the second, he is hedged about in his office with such pomp and dignity that it is almost impossible for any witness or accused to speak naturally and freely to him ; and, in the third, he belongs—in all but the very rarest cases—by upbringing, education and surroundings, to a sheltered class as far removed as possible from the outlook, the problems, the temptations, and the habits of most of the litigants with whom he has to deal, and, in particular, of the accused over whose lives he exercises almost blindly a terrible power.

In Russia, everything is as different from this as it can be. A professional judge and two co-judges sit at a small table, and deal with the prosecution, the accused, the advocates, the litigants, with as little formality as a group of English peasants arguing politics in a village inn. Two of the three were, a week before, and will be a week after, at work in factory or farm or office, like the litigants or the accused ; the other may have been in factory or farm or office last year, and may be again next year, without either loss or gain in prestige or material reward, or sense of superiority or inferiority. One's appreciation of the inestimable social value of three such judges spending over

half an hour in a friendly but searching cross-examination of a man who had already pleaded guilty, in order to have before them every fact which could possibly help in deciding what kind of reformative treatment should be applied to him, was rather increased by the knowledge that, an hour before, they had been engaged, with equal good temper, for ten minutes after their judgment had been definitely pronounced, in a spirited argument with an unsuccessful defendant who still thought, and repeatedly asserted at the top of his voice, that the judgment was wrong. (In England, he would have been removed by the usher.)

The whole spirit of the courts in this very important aspect is so admirable that the most orthodox of Western Europeans might be tempted to say that, if this simplicity could not be achieved without the virtual abolition of classes, the price would not be too high.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The question now arises, what we can learn from the history of law and justice in Russia in the last fifteen crowded years. England must in the near future change or decay ; the change may come slowly or quickly, and, whilst it must in any case be far-reaching, it may be more or less fundamental in character. Once there is really a fundamental change, whether introduced slowly or with comparative rapidity, there must obviously follow substantial modifications of the judicature and of the legal profession, and one main object of this report is to record any recommendations which study of the present Russian system suggests to the mind of the student. It is not, of course, my province to make recommendations for the promotion of law reform in present-day England or for the amendment of substantive law ; the real task is to advise, in the light of recent studies, what changes should be introduced into the

English legal system when any fundamental change in the political, social, and industrial organisation of the country is brought about.

### *The Judges and the Courts*

Many features of the expected change will be as unwelcome to the judges and lawyers as they will be to others of the privileged classes. At some stage in the history of the change—an early stage in all probability—the courts will be found to be so completely devoid of sympathy with and understanding of political developments that a far-reaching and rapid reform of the court system will be inevitable. When that time comes, how should the reform be carried out? The considered view is offered that the virtues of the existing judicature are so essentially those least adapted to survive reform that the true remedy is to abolish the old judicature (including the magistrates) and build afresh on new foundations, leaving the individuals of the old judicature eligible like anyone else to seek office under the new régime. Now, how exactly should we build on the new foundations? The problem is not a simple one, either in England or elsewhere. It is a problem not merely of conflicting interests between socialism and reaction, to be resolved quite simply in favour of socialism; it is a problem, also, of reconciling conflicting tendencies. The ideal tribunal would be a judge or judges who had both full technical training and also a real understanding of the common man; to make your judges out of laymen because they understand their fellows involves a great sacrifice of efficiency; and yet the daily work of the trained professional judge, however fundamentally popular the social structure, tends to narrow his outlook and to remove him steadily further from a real comprehension of the life of his fellow-men. Carefully compensated machinery is needed if the courts are to run smoothly and avoid both the defects indicated. The experience of Russia should, of course, neither be ignored nor slavishly followed; but in certain respects it is of great value; and, on consideration of the



whole available material, the following recommendations are made :

(1) The judges under the new régime should be appointed from year to year by the Executive ; they should not necessarily be practising advocates, but should possess a knowledge of law, sociology, criminology, and political economy, tested by examination ; they should be Civil Servants under a Ministry of Justice ;

(2) They should sit with two co-judges, selected in the first instance after the Russian model ; and, until it was seen how the new system worked, all questions of law and fact should be decided by a majority of the court ;

(3) Their work should be simplified by a thorough reform of procedure, including the virtual abolition of rules of evidence ; the details of this fall outside the scope of this report, but will be familiar to law reformers ;

(4) They should have civil and criminal jurisdiction throughout a range of courts, which will consist of a large number of local courts of primary jurisdiction, a smaller number of larger courts of unlimited original jurisdiction and of appeal jurisdiction, and one Supreme Court of appellate jurisdiction ;

(5) They should be responsible, like any other Civil Servants, for any breach of their duties.

### *The Advocates*

With regard to the legal profession, it is clear that, even if the curiously privileged position of the Bar should last until political changes arrive, it will be impossible to permit it to last any longer. Owing to the very close associations of the Bench and the Bar, it is plain that the criticisms which apply to the one apply with almost equal force to the other.

The following recommendations are made :

(1) The two branches of the legal profession should be completely amalgamated ;

(2) There should be some organisation substantially similar to that of the " consultation bureaux " and the

“collegia” of Russia, enabling every citizen to obtain legal advice and representation whenever he genuinely needs it, paying for it, according to his means, into the funds of the collegium, and the advocates being remunerated by regular salaries, out of the funds of the collegium, assessed according to their abilities ;

(3) Advocates should be as much entitled as other persons, but no more, to appointment as judges ;

(4) Advocates should be qualified by examination in the same way as judges, and any person properly qualified should be entitled as of right to join the collegium.

### *The Prisons*

It is unnecessary to descant upon the lines which prison reform should take in England. Substantially speaking, everything that Russia has recently done is what English reformers have preached for years with unflagging courage ; and their courage will be rewarded, no doubt, when the favourable conditions that have helped reform in Russia are present with us.

### *Legal Education*

With regard to legal education, this would be equally free to all persons showing an aptitude for it ; it is a matter of indifference whether it be given in a general university or in special schools of law, but it should, of course, cover a much wider range than the present legal curricula of universities, the Council of Legal Education, or the Law Society. The only specific comment or recommendation that need be made, beyond what has already been implied in the observations on the education of judges and advocates, is this : that any influence that can be brought to bear in the next few years on legal or other education in the direction of broadening and democratising both the education and the general outlook of those who are students now, and will be, presumably, young men and women when the change is faced, will be of the utmost value. Both in this respect and in others it must be born in mind that, the more

far-reaching the political changes, the greater will be the numbers of technically qualified persons unwilling or unfitted to work in the new conditions ; and that, in those circumstances, the more trained lawyers with alert and broadened minds that are available, the brighter will be the prospects of successful working in the earlier and more difficult years.

# WOMEN AND CHILDREN

by

## MARGARET I. COLE

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*Introductory Note*

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- IV. The Life of the Child
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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I WENT to Soviet Russia during August 1932 for the special purpose (*a*) of supplementing by personal observation what I had learned from books and from other visitors of the general attitude of the Soviet Union towards women and children, and (*b*) of seeing, as far as possible, to what extent and by what means this attitude was being carried out in practice. Naturally, during the time available, it was not possible to do more than "sample" the very numerous and varied activities of this kind. I visited only Leningrad, Moscow and the Ukraine ; but even in those places I saw enough to convince me (even if I had not already expected it) that so vast an experiment, over so vast an area, must inevitably show very wide differences of administration, of efficiency, and even of character in different districts ; and that this is peculiarly the case in work among children, where the personality of the worker counts for so much. It is therefore not possible to give anything like a statistical picture of the work which the Soviet Union is doing for women and children. What one can do, and what I have tried to do, is to give, first, some impressions of the underlying ideas and purpose (which is very important) ; secondly, an account of the general rules which are laid down centrally for the carrying out of those ideas ; and thirdly, my experience of their practical working and of its effects. In the last category I have to thank Mrs. Pritt, as well as some of my fellow-contributors, who kindly provided me with notes on one or two institutions which I was unable to see for myself. Otherwise, I have included nothing which was not either told or shown to me personally ; and where my informants differed—as on occasion informants do—I have noted the differences, and where possible tried to arrive at the correct answer.

## I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are two general facts of great importance for the life of women and children in Soviet Russia with which no foreign observer can fail to be impressed, as they affect not only the general attitude of the rulers, but also the day-to-day provisions. The first is that the Russian woman, *as a general rule*, works, and has always worked, alongside the man, and on an equality with him. This has several important consequences. In the first place, the equality of payment removes at once a whole host of difficulties which face Western countries. I do not mean that wages are mathematically equal ; they are not, any more than the wages of working men under the Soviets are mathematically equal. But the general effect is one of equality ; and this, by destroying the notion of women as a form of cheap labour, at once removes one of the greatest obstacles to good relations between the sexes. In Russia the suggestion, which I have heard more than once, that for a given low-paid job there should be employed either a man on half-time or *a competent woman*, cannot be made.

Secondly, the Russian woman, having worked before the Revolution and worked during it, continues to work now ; and is generally expected to do so. Again, I do not mean that every woman in Russia has got a job outside her home. The Soviet Union is full of exceptions to every rule ; there are some women who do not do paid work (though they may do other work) ; there are some (more, in all probability) who give up paid work for certain periods. But one of the fundamental ideas of the Union (in which, it may be noted, it differs from the ideal of Fascismo) is that the State of the future needs the active co-operation of its women citizens in its public economy, not merely as *individual* producers and nurturers of the new generation. And the Russian provisions, both for child-birth and for the years of childhood, must be regarded partly in this light. The U.S.S.R. looks upon women as citizens and workers as well as mothers ; and takes pains to secure that the performance

of the latter function shall not render the former impossible. The effect of this attitude on the family, both on what is usually called "The Ideal of Family Life" and upon the lives of individual homes, will be considered later; here we need only note that the large pool of practically unemployed or seriously under-employed women which exists in England, particularly in the middle and upper classes, does not exist in Russia. And presumably the problem of the middle-aged woman whose children have grown up and no longer need her, but whose services are not effectively available for the community, either because she has never been taught to work or has been allowed to forget it, will not exist either.

The second guiding principle is quite simple, and has been often stated. It is that the Soviet Union, as a whole, cares most, and spends most, for the growing generation. Soviet Russia is at present a poor country, devoting a large part of its collective income to saving for capital expenditure. But it is not, where it can help it, saving on the children, but rather endeavouring to see that, when the vital needs of the necessary adult workers have been supplied, the next call upon resources shall be to provide for the citizens of the future. The contrast, to any historian, between this attitude and the attitude of England during the first half of the nineteenth century, when the situation with regard to capital supply was somewhat similar, is most suggestive. So, on a smaller scale, is the fact that, at the moment when we are, as a nation, proceeding to cut down secondary education, the U.S.S.R. is embarking upon an effort designed to extend the beyond-kindergarten period of school life to ten years, i.e. from seven to seventeen.

The following pages, it will be found, deal more fully with children than with women, for the simple reason that there are in Russia so many specialised children's institutions which can be quickly seen, whereas women are not there treated as generically different from men, only a differing in certain obvious respects. I found women all over the place, as one might say, holding high, if not the



highest, offices in all manner of institutions ; and people did not seem particularly interested, as English people would be, in whether there were more women in this or that concern, and, if so, how many. The angle of approach is different. How far "neighbourhood organisations" and such bodies as parents' committees in schools tend to be composed of women rather than men—how far, in fact, a natural differentiation of interests has evolved—would be a very interesting enquiry for sociologists, but would involve a much longer stay in the country and much wider and deeper acquaintance with its conditions. One can only deal with what one has had time to observe.

The Soviet Union concerns itself collectively with the whole life of children, from the pre-natal period to the end of their school days. This concern, however, is not entirely expressed by centralised action. Such central bodies as Narkomsdrav (People's Commissariat of Health), and Narkompros (People's Commissariat of Education), which are themselves decentralised to a large extent among the various Republics of the Union, lay down certain standards, principles and general rules. But to a very large extent, in this as in other departments of Russian life, the enforcement and application of an apparently rigid general standard is decentralised to a greater extent than many observers have at all realised. Time and again I have asked (as at the great reformatory experiment which is called Bolshevo), "But would not such-and-such a regulation press very hard, or prove unworkable, in such-and-such a case?" and have been met with an expression of astonishment (which no difference of language can disguise or cause one to mistake), and the reply, "But, of course, in such a case it would not be enforced. The Collective [or the Factory Committee, or some such body] would know all about the case, and would take the proper action." And the Collective may be a group of any size, according to the area or unit within which it operates. The collective control of the U.S.S.R. over child-life rests essentially upon the co-operation of small collective groups all over the country which are in touch with the

actual circumstances of each case, and are presumed to know what ought to be done. The proper appreciation of this fact is of immense importance for the understanding of the work of the Soviet Union in this as in other departments of life.

## II. PRE-NATAL TREATMENT

### (a) *Abortion and Contraception*

The amount of centralised control, and the amount of local autonomy, naturally vary according to the subject concerned. On the actual question of child-birth, the desires of the centre are expressed with exceptional firmness. The Soviet Union wants an increasing population ; it wants a vigorous population ; and believes that for this purpose the pre-natal and immediately post-natal period is the most important. Accordingly, it concerns itself strongly with child-birth, abortion and the care of expectant and nursing mothers.

As everyone knows, abortion is legal in Russia ; but it is not unrestricted. Abortion is absolutely illegal unless performed in Government hospitals or clinics, and if performed outside is punishable by three years' imprisonment—in Russia a very heavy penalty. (There are said to be Government hospitals in every town and district ; and as soon as a new factory is built, or a new district opened up, efforts are made to provide it with a Government hospital.) Medical examination is a necessary preliminary to any abortion ; and if there is no medical or other reason—such as the size of the family—why the woman should not bear her child, she is strongly urged to do so. In the case of a first pregnancy, abortion is very vigorously discouraged. The last word, however, rests with the woman ; if she won't have her child, she won't, and that is the end. But it would take a strong-minded woman to stand up to the battery of propaganda and persuasion that is brought to bear.

The main difference, of course, between Russia and

Western countries is that, abortion being legal and recognised, all need for secrecy and its evil consequences has disappeared. The fees charged are small ; to the poorest workers it is free ; and wages are paid during convalescence, as in the case of normal child-birth. Its effect upon population is difficult to estimate ; one receives such varying information about the ratio of abortions to births. At all events, the population is tending to rise rapidly. Post-natal child care no doubt accounts for a great deal of this rise ; but it must also be remembered that in Russia, as in all countries with a large peasant population, motherhood normally begins very early in life. The mothers whom I saw attending a clinic in Leningrad mostly looked about seventeen or eighteen.

Contraception, as an alternative to abortion, is on the increase ; and it is clearly recognised, as in the literature of the Moscow Institute for the Protection of Motherhood, that it is an alternative. Whether it is a preferred alternative is not quite certain ; some Soviet doctors would say so, others would not, and some, as in England, would prefer that there should be neither. In any event, there are two difficulties in the extensive use of birth-control : first, that it involves at any rate some degree of intelligence and care, which is difficult to secure in the case of rural workers in backward areas ; secondly, that the appliances are all made within the Soviet Union, and are not always reliable. There is, however, a steady "sex education" on this and other matters going on, which has been developed rather further in some provincial centres than in Moscow ; e.g. in Odessa there is a general rule that young people thinking of marriage (whatever form of marriage they choose) shall consult a doctor. This is not a law, but a thing which "is done," and enforced by that quasi-public-school code which is so strong a feature of life in Soviet Russia. Again, most clinics, whether in factories or elsewhere, exhibit pictures illustrative of birth-control, and give lectures and information ; and some institutions, like the one in Moscow already mentioned, have a very elaborate system of advice and enquiry

—including a form of great length and infinite detail which the doctor fills up gradually as the consultations proceed.

(b) *Child-Birth*

Passing, however, from this rather negative aspect of the question, we turn to the arrangements for child-birth. Here undeniably, the Soviet laws make the most liberal provision in the world for the protection of motherhood. The law lays down that every Russian woman working at a manual occupation<sup>1</sup> shall be given four months' rest at full pay, two months before and two months after her child is born. For office workers—"pen-pushers," as they are picturesquely called—the period is reduced to twelve weeks. In addition, the mother, if she needs and cannot afford it, receives help with the baby's layette, a special allowance for "maternity," and artificial food if she is unable to feed it herself. Some of this assistance, of course, is sometimes provided also in capitalist countries; but it is apt in such countries to bear the stigma of "charity." The mother is expected to be grateful, to present herself at the most inconvenient time possible to receive the gifts and to "curtsy to the kind ladies"; in Soviet Russia it is not a charity, but a right.

All pregnant women are expected to attend at a clinic—either their factory or office clinic or a district clinic—for pre-natal care; and I was informed that this is a condition of continuing to draw their wages. Such clinics, of course, vary from place to place according to the skill, tact and experience of those who run them. The best that I saw was a district clinic in Lavrov Street, Leningrad, serving the Smolny district, where there was a steady stream of expectant and nursing mothers coming for consultation. There were also very effective posters in the waiting-rooms and elsewhere. These are changed according to season; in August they dealt mainly with the dangers of food pollution from flies, etc. The mother must continue to attend the clinic periodically—bringing her baby—during the period

<sup>1</sup> Certain other occupations, e.g. doctoring, are classed as manual for this purpose.

after child-birth for which she is drawing wages without working. There is, in Leningrad and Moscow and as far as possible in other centres, a follow-up system by which the mother is encouraged to continue to apply to the clinic for advice ; and, further, the staff of the clinic visit her in her own home and find out how she is getting on. The extent to which this latter service is operative must clearly depend upon the staff available, but, in general, it may be said that the Russian health service, in this and other matters, very vividly appreciates the importance of " after-care."

The importance of this " advice service " can hardly be exaggerated as a means of preservation of child life, and of increasing the comfort and happiness of mothers. Figures are not too easy to obtain ; but we may note that in 1910 the rate of infantile mortality (under one year) in European Russia was 285 per thousand ; by 1927 it had declined to 184 ; and in 1928 it was 137 in Leningrad and 128 in Moscow, and is said to be still declining, though it remains, of course, well above that of Britain, for example. These figures are very remarkable in a country which is still emerging from a backward peasant condition ; it is perhaps more remarkable that, according to an official of Narkomsdrav in Moscow, the major part of the public health appropriations in the backward areas, such as the independent republics of Kazakstan and Uzbekistan, is expended upon sanitary education and propaganda, of which a great deal is propaganda by poster and placard.<sup>1</sup> The increase in the population, noted above, must be as much due to the saving of children from an early death as to any other cause.

As far as the actual births are concerned, it is the declared intention of the heads of the Union that as many children as possible should be born in hospitals. Some may be horrified at this ; they do not know the conditions of the overcrowded Russian worker, who is still not fully escaped

<sup>1</sup> The part played by museums of child life and health conditions should be noticed, as in the various Institutes for the Protection of Mother and Child. A museum of this kind is not, in Russia, a place of historical or vaguely cultural interest, but a practical educational institution.

from the centuries during which, as one of our party said, "he was worse housed than a normal English pig." This intention has not yet been fulfilled ; but it is hoped the Second Five Year Plan will see its achievement. At any rate, lying-in hospitals are being built as fast as men and materials are available ; and women are being urged to attend them. The worker used to English standards would probably find these hospitals rough and ready ; for example, there is a shortage of anæsthetics, of soap and of linen, which is part of the general shortage of consumers' goods to which other contributors to this book have drawn attention. Anæsthetics are not commonly used in childbirth (or in abortion) ; Russian doctors admit this, and add that "they are not necessary or expected." This may very well be so, having regard again to the previous history of Russia ; but, as what we call "civilisation" extends itself over the mass of the people, it seems probable that the demand for anæsthetics and other drugs will proportionately increase, and that, unless there are supplies available from abroad, difficulties may arise. The hope of the Russian health authorities is that Russia may be completely self-supporting as regards the important drugs ; but they freely admitted that this was not so at present. Quinine, which is urgently needed for the stamping out of malaria, is, owing to certain capitalist monopolies, a very urgent difficulty ; the Russians are making great efforts to manufacture synthetic quinine.

### III. HOSPITALS

At this point it may be desirable to insert a note upon Soviet hospitals generally. They vary very much. The Kremlin Hospital in Moscow, for example, could give points to most English hospitals in equipment, design and management. It has many of the newest devices, and all in working order ; it has a very high standard of surgical cleanliness ; and in some of its arrangements, such as the

"wards," none of which contain more than two patients, it compares very favourably with London nursing-homes which charge twelve guineas a week to their inmates : I was told that there were other hospitals which were even better found. But this hospital can only be used by Government officials and those high in the ranks of the Communist Party. (I am bound to add here that no Russian to whom I talked seemed to feel the slightest resentment about this. They accepted that the life of a high Government official was of such importance that, if he fell ill, the best resources of the State must be devoted to restoring him to health. This may be "Thermidor," to use Trotsky's phrase ; but, if so, many of the Jacobins support it. Our Moscow guide, himself a passionate and occasionally boring Communist sympathiser, regarded the Kremlin Hospital, to which he could not possibly have been admitted, as a triumphant advertisement of the Soviet régime.)

The Metchnikov Hospital at Leningrad is, probably, more typical. Here medical purists might be shocked by the absence of uniform and by the way in which persons—including patients—wander in and out of wards, including even the operating theatres. Probably the standard of sterilisation is lower than that of the best English hospitals. On the other hand, there are points on which English hospitals might do well to take a lesson from the Metchnikov. There is, for example, the provision of twenty-four or forty-eight hours' isolation in a private room for a patient who has undergone an operation, which is surely most desirable ; and there is further the garden—vegetable, fruit and flower—upon which neurotic patients are put to work for short periods, and which supplies flowers to the wards and the private rooms. I was not able to inspect a district hospital : I think, however, from information received, that in cleanliness and privacy some of them might come as a shock to persons brought up on Western standards. But the previous history of the Russian people must be remembered ; any sort of hospital may well be better than none.

Neither the First, nor the Second, Five Year Plan, happily, proposes any numerical increase in the rate of production of young Soviet citizens ; it may, however, be put on record that an enthusiastic official of Narkomsdrav, speaking of the work of a particular maternity hospital, said : "The mothers go in, and the children come out—so regularly—just like a conveyor."

## V. THE LIFE OF THE CHILD

### 1. *The Crèche*

After two months or six weeks, as the case may be, the Soviet mother goes back to work. Then comes the question of the care of the child. For children between two months and four years the U.S.S.R. has a fairly comprehensive system of crèches, which it hopes before long to make completely comprehensive. The present position, as stated by an official of Narkomsdrav in Moscow, is that every factory must provide a crèche for the children of its women workers ; that the larger offices also provide crèches ; and that office workers, and women who do not come under either of these categories, can get their children into district crèches, which are not confined to any particular grouping. My own experience leads me to think that this is a rather optimistic view ; that, whereas factories *do* provide crèches, the crèches are not always large enough to accommodate all the children of all the workers employed, and that some non-factory workers have to contrive, somehow or other, to look after their own children without the aid of a crèche. It should also be noted that, in the country districts, crèches are normally provided only for the children of those working on State or collective farms (*sovkhozniki* or *kolkhozniki*), and that, therefore, there is no collective provision made for the unknown number of children of independent peasants.

Nevertheless, the great bulk of young children in the towns, and in agricultural districts which work in harmony



with the Soviet policy, are undoubtedly cared for in crèches, where the charge made is roughly proportionate to the workers' means, and, if the worker is sufficiently poor, is reduced to zero. To these crèches the child is brought when the mother goes to work, and kept until she leaves, or sometimes an hour after she leaves, in order that she may have an opportunity to rest ; and, in the cases where the mother is put on night work, the crèche normally arranges to keep the child all night for five nights (the sixth day being the day of rest). Where the mother is feeding the child herself, she gets time off from her factory or office (without loss of pay) to come over to the crèche and feed it ; and it may be noted here that, not only are crèches provided in prisons for the children of women prisoners, but that, if a mother is imprisoned and prefers not to take her child into prison (as she well may, if there is someone available at home to look after it), she is allowed to go home to feed it.

Crèches, naturally, vary a good deal in efficiency. The best I saw was the Leningrad crèche run in connection with the clinic which I have mentioned earlier. Here the children were thoroughly well cared for, and looked immensely healthy ; there was an apparently adequate supply of toys ; there were provisions for regular bathing in hot water, for clean " crèche " clothes ; and (very important in Russia) there were hardly any signs of either flies or more noxious insects. Another, belonging to a Moscow textile factory, was run by a rather overwrought woman who displayed a hatred of visitors and enquiries of any kind ; here the children were inclined to cry and to make disturbances. Another, in Kharkov, in connection with a textile factory whose employees were largely drawn from backward rural areas, showed a high proportion of rather under-nourished and listless children and also an inadequate sterilisation of thermometers, for example ; another, on a collective farm in the Ukraine, was a little bleak, suggesting that cleanliness and whitewashing had taken precedence of any other consideration. Not a great many of the crèches I saw would,

on equipment and personnel, have won the unqualified approval of Miss Margaret McMillan ; on the other hand, it must be remembered that the U.S.S.R. is endeavouring to make the crèche system universal. If this is understood, and the mere numerical difficulty of obtaining sufficient workers of sufficient intelligence and sympathy to staff these crèches properly understood, the result is nothing short of amazing.

One other point may be mentioned, as illustrative of the flexibility of the Soviet régime. It is customary for the older children in crèches, as for the school and kindergarten children (of whom more hereafter), to go to holiday camps, either by themselves or with their parents, during the summer months. Consequently, all the crèches I visited during August were somewhat under-inhabited. None the less, all of them contained a certain proportion of "veterans" (between 3 and 4 years) who had not gone into the country. For these, various explanations were offered, e.g. that two or three were still being breast-fed (this is a common phenomenon in peasant countries, and, though the Soviet Union dislikes it, it still continues to exist in some cases) ; or that the child in question was particularly delicate and needed to be kept under its mother's care ; or, quite simply, because " his mother refuses to let him go." The relaxation of a general rule to meet individual idiosyncrasies could not, I feel, be better exemplified.

## 2. *The Kindergarten*

At four years old the Russian child emerges from the crèche and enters upon the " kindergarten period," which lasts until it is seven ; and at this point it comes, in part at any rate, under the care of Narkompros. At this point also, the observer notes, the child begins to share in the " tightening of the belt," which is the lot of its elders. The officials at Narkomsdrav assured me that there was no kind of shortage in the supplies for crèches and children in crèches, although there were not quite enough crèches to go round. This view, I think, was not quite correct, for one crèche,

at any rate, complained of a shortage of milk. But in general, it appeared to be true that the babies got the best of whatever was going, and they seemed, for the most part, healthy and well looked after. Among the kindergartens, however, a definite shortage began to be noticeable. The meals given at one kindergarten in Kiev were said to be "not quite sufficient at present. We hope it will be better in the autumn." The children, however, were in the garden playing a round singing game. They looked happy enough, and well and clean; there was hardly any sign of rickets, for which one was naturally on the look-out. Elsewhere, also, it was mentioned that there was not enough money to provide school clothes—the ideal both for crèche and kindergarten is that the children should take off their clothes when they arrive and be provided with special school clothes, which is an excellent preventive of infection.<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet ideal is that every child shall go to a kindergarten; but that is not yet realised, because the problem is so large. In Kiev, for example, there are about 200 kindergartens, covering 2,500 children; but this is said to be insufficient. More are being set up as fast as it can be done; here, as in the case of schools proper, the supply both of teachers and of buildings presents a difficulty.<sup>2</sup>

Kindergartens are run by all sorts of collective bodies, including factories and *kolkhozi*. The great hammer and sickle works at Kharkov, for example, runs its own kindergarten as well as its own schools. But the smaller institutions do not as a rule have kindergartens of their own, but send the children of their workers to kindergartens run directly by the State. In such a case, the kindergarten makes arrangements with the principal factories to contribute to its support, sometimes by actual monetary assistance, more often with gifts of clothes or school materials or the loan of demonstrators. The teachers' wages and the general

<sup>1</sup> The city crèches and kindergartens that I saw had also a room, or rooms, with separate exit, for the temporary isolation of suspicious cases.

<sup>2</sup> The latest returns (Nov. 1932) show 6,000,000 children in kindergartens, as compared with 2,750,000 in 1931 and 450,000 in 1928.

upkeep of the school are paid by Narkompros, which also receives the fees, so that anything obtained from the factories is by way of an extra and settled by special agreement. The kindergarten which I saw in Kiev drew half its pupils from a "Physico-Mechanical Factory" in the neighbourhood, but did not seem to think the factory a very generous contributor.

This kindergarten is attended by a hundred children, of whom about half were away in the country at the time of our visit. It has a dormitory for the use of children whose mothers are night workers, which holds from fifteen to twenty children. The other children attend from eight o'clock to five; they have two breakfasts, dinner and tea—four meals in all, though the menus of the two breakfasts sounded pretty light. Boarders get supper as well. According to the time-table I was given, a good deal of the day seems to be spent in various forms of dressing and undressing, taking things out and washing them and putting them away—all very sensible forms of activity for four-year-olds. The children get and wash up their own meals, make their own beds and tidy their dormitory, and look after at any rate part of the garden; it was not in very good condition, but then it was very hot and dry. The garden was certainly better than mine would have been under similar circumstances!

What is called "the pedagogical process" only takes up an hour and a half of each day, the remainder being spent in rest and organised games. "The pedagogical process" is mostly drawing and modelling, and a little other hand-work, with some instruction in Communism, which seems to be more or less the equivalent of an English school's "civics," "hygiene," and "Bible stories" rolled into one, only much more definite and purposeful. The older children are taught to read and write. The children as a whole are divided into four age-groups, and organised into brigades (particularly the senior children) for doing various jobs. There is a children's court to try the naughty children, but I gathered that the staff exercised some not-quite-defined control over the penalties inflicted—as, indeed,

anyone with experience of the strong moral sense and fierce reactions of small children would hope. All in the senior group are October Children (see below), and Pioneers also turn up and lecture them as part of their Pioneer duties.

For these children there are seven tutors, of whom I saw two and the head, two "technical workers" (i.e. those who do the housework), and one cook. The salaries are about 117 roubles per month. This is on the low side, but the staff get their food at school for a nominal charge—10 roubles per month. The two teachers were amusingly like similar teachers might have been in England—one a spinsterish woman of thirty-five or so, with glasses and a harassed, kindly expression, the other a pretty "pupil-teacher" type of girl. Their training sounded a little inadequate by our standards. The pedagogical Institute of Kiev has a three years' training course for "pre-school," i.e. kindergarten, teachers, but no one on this staff had taken it. The two I saw, had, however, both done short courses and were attending evening classes. The fact is that, as one would suppose, the teachers are learning as they go along; if the Russians had waited to start their pre-school system (and their school system for the matter of that) until they had a supply of teachers whom Western countries would consider fully-qualified, they would be waiting now—and the children would be getting no education.

I have described this kindergarten at some length because, as it was holiday-time when I was in Russia, I could not see any real schools at work, and the kindergarten was the nearest approach I could get. It was not, I should say, a very good kindergarten; I have seen much better ones in England, to say nothing of the Continent. The equipment was rather scanty, the food not too abundant, the teachers not very fully trained, and so on. But the significance lies, not in the merits of this one kindergarten, but in the fact that there are 200 others in the single city of Kiev, all brought into existence since the Revolution; and that a steady attempt is being made to extend the system so as

to bring all children within its scope. The same remarks apply to the crèches. The district crèche in Leningrad was really good and well equipped ; and the children looked exceptionally well and happy. Others were much less good, and a good English nursery school would be far superior. It is sometimes faintly irritating when Russians point out an inferior crèche to a foreign visitor as though a crèche were something unheard-of before. But, of course, until the Revolution it *was* unheard-of over large parts of Russia ; now it is practically universal. Any criticism of Russian crèches which compares them with English nursery schools must begin by pointing out what proportion of English children do, or can, attend nursery schools.

### 3. *School Days*

After the pre-school age, the Russian child goes to school. As the schools were closed, my information about them is generalised information given me by the Civil Service, and I will do no more than summarise it briefly. The school period in Russia is seven years long ; last year it was four years, and they are endeavouring to make it ten years, i.e. from seven to seventeen. It is divided into primary and secondary. In the primary groups, teachers are expected to teach all subjects but physical culture and music, for which, fortunately, specialists are provided ; in the secondary groups the teachers specialise. There is a serious shortage of secondary teachers at present—and, to a less degree, of primary teachers also ; but the rates of pay are higher, and so primary teachers are encouraged to train for secondary work. Other inducements are sometimes offered ; e.g. teachers in rural districts, where the supply is shortest and the work therefore very hard, are equated with the workers in heavy industry as regards rations. The Young Communist League (the Komsomols) does a great deal to provide special courses and training for teachers apart from the work of the Pedagogical Institutes and their like. The teachers' trade union runs a good number of rest homes, and teachers can also get into

other rest homes. As to general rates of pay, primary teachers average about 100 roubles per month (with some food at school), secondary teachers from 100 to 200 roubles, and heads of schools from 300 to 400. There are still a good many teachers getting less than these rates ; but general efforts are being made to raise pay.<sup>1</sup> Teachers may give lectures, etc., outside the school, and get paid for them ; they may also do private coaching, e.g. instruction in a foreign language ; but this is rare. Their salaries, and the school equipment, are paid for by Narkompros, but factories which do not run their own schools have to make agreements with other schools to contribute to their support, as in the case of kindergartens.

The food in schools seems to be rather short. Mr. Pantalemon, the Chief Inspector of Social Education for the Ukraine, said that only breakfast was now provided, though they were trying to add dinner. The breakfasts are served and arranged (though not cooked) by a committee of parents, who also act as a kind of school committee to find money for equipment beyond what is provided in other ways. Hours vary rather from district to district, and particularly as between town and country ; but, at the instance of the doctors, endeavours are being made to get the hours more standardised. Younger children work about four hours, older ones up to six in the day ; and there are about 220 school days in the year. I was told that in the Ukraine practically all children of eight to fifteen were actually at school ; in Moscow and Leningrad school life goes on longer ; but in the backward areas it is distinctly less. Probably all children up to about twelve are at school, and a good many above that age. For those above fifteen there are all sorts of provisions pending the definite raising of the age, e.g. " labour schools," which appear to be a sort of part-time continued education, admission to adult polytechnics, evening classes, and technical schools of all kinds. The supply of technical schools

<sup>1</sup> See other chapters of this book for comparative rates of wages in other occupations.

is exceptionally advanced, and in some parts actually exceeds the demand.

The government of schools is, in principle, much the same as that in kindergartens. I gather that the extreme of "pupil-control," as described, for instance, in *The Diary of a Communist Schoolboy*, is now forbidden; and that the disciplinary system resembles more that of other countries, though there is a great deal of self-government by means of courts run by the children themselves, and of clubs for many purposes. The children also organise some things which would, in England, be left to the staffs; e.g. there is a central children's co-operative for the supply of books. Many of the children's organisations are, as one would expect, run by members of the junior Red organisations, such as the Pioneers, and many of the young teachers are Komsomols. The final voice in school discipline appears to rest, now, with the teachers; but, as in all parts of the Soviet system, there is ample opportunity for complaints and discussion. Complaints may be made individually, but they are more frequently brought through a parents' organisation or through a trade union. R.K.I., that much-feared body,<sup>1</sup> does not interfere with education except in very exceptional cases; and there is no "Triangle" in schools.

Curricula it was idle to investigate when the schools were not in session; for printed time-tables tell you nothing unless you can see for yourself what, for example, is meant by "history," what it includes and how it is taught. The authorities admitted to a certain shortage of text-books, partly owing to difficulties in the supply of paper and partly because they could not get them written fast enough. Pre-revolutionary school-books are forbidden, because of both the alphabet and the ideology (though teachers are allowed access to them); new text-books are written mainly by staff writers, and discussed by the teachers' trade union and by various subject conferences. School text-books, like other books, have to pass the censorship, and their content has, naturally enough, to be strongly Communist.

<sup>1</sup> See G. R. Mitchison's chapter, p. 87.



Finally, mention must be made of the "cultural autonomy," which is so strong a feature of Soviet government as well as of Soviet education, and which in this case is expressed in the provision of schools for different language groups. In the single city of Kharkov, for example, as well as schools teaching in Ukrainian and Russian, there are Yiddish-speaking schools and schools teaching in Greek, Armenian, German and Tartar. There is no English-speaking school in Kharkov, but there are such schools in Dneprostroy and other places in the Ukraine. All children taught in these languages learn Russian at school. As a foreign language (generally German or English) has to be learnt as well, these children will presumably turn out trilingual.

#### *4. Other Aspects*

Here is, then, the framework into which child life in the Soviet Union is fitted. But the picture would be very incomplete if one did not give some idea of the life outside of crèche, school and kindergarten. The visitor to Lenin-grad or Moscow or any of the large towns, during the summer, gets an impression of an immense number of children, in the very minimum of clothing, careering about, playing games, stopping the passers-by, and generally behaving as untrammelled children behave in any civilisation. In Moscow, for example, the small boys dash in and out of the river at all points and at all times, sometimes seriously interfering with the river traffic ; and there are no women police watching to see how many clothes they have on. Most of them had only a pair of knickers to start with anyway ; and as one watches them dash in and out and dry off in the Russian sun, one has the feeling that, whatever the shortage of fats, their clothes and their habits secure that whatever vitamins can be drawn from sunlight on the naked skin are being obtained to the maximum.

But there is, also, an almost infinite network of extra-school organisations for children. First, of course, there are the junior Red organisations—the October Children for

the little ones, the Pioneers for the middle years, and the Young Communist League for the older ones up to twenty-four. These organisations, as has been pointed out more than once, resemble in some ways the Scout and Guide movements in this country ; but their functions and importance are very much wider. They are part of the organisation of government ; they are the chief means of training the young generation to be good Communists ; and they take their duties very seriously. A boy or girl who wants to be a Pioneer has to go through probation like an applicant for the Communist Party, and when a member has to perform, not " one good action a day," but specific jobs which are needed to help the show along, and which may be organising a holiday camp, lecturing to clubs in a kindergarten, or a whole host of other things. It cannot be denied that this vigorous public service makes prigs of some of the children ; an offensive self-righteous little brat (and there are such phenomena in Russia as anywhere else) will not be less offensive for being trained in the Communist spirit and the Communist slogans. But this is all part of the experiment as a whole. The Communist boys and girls, like the Communist adults, are part of this great effort—which has, at present, all the faults and virtues of a pioneering movement—to drive home to every member of the community an active sense of social duty ; and to do it, not merely by legislation and Governmental effort, but by individuals and groups keeping their fellows up to the mark.

But not all, or by any means all, of the energies, even of the Communist children, are confined to civic activity. There are athletics ; there are clubs of all sorts, some confined to the Red organisations, some open ; and these clubs and societies have regular contests over a wide area. (It should be mentioned that here, as in school activities, there seems to be no trace of money prizes ; e.g. a school or class which has done particularly well may be rewarded with a new super-radio set, or something of the sort, and individuals may also get *premia*—but not in cash.) Further,

there is an enormous network of camps, holiday homes, and the like, to which children go in the long summer holidays. Figures are not available ; but if the few places which I was able to visit were any guide, about 50 per cent. of the town children get away into the country, either with or without their parents, during the summer.

These camps, and the homes for homeless children (for whom see below), are scattered all over Russia. There are also the " forest schools " and sanatoria, mainly for consumptive children, which the Soviet Union is setting up as rapidly as possible. Two of our party visited a forest school outside Moscow, and were greatly impressed by the cleanliness, simplicity, and common sense of its régime. The cost of keeping children in these forest schools is defrayed as to 75 per cent. by the parents' trade union, the remainder being paid by the parents, unless they are too poor, in which case the money is found by Narkomsdrav or by some other public institution. The determination that, so far as possible, no child shall be deprived by poverty of any available benefit is as manifest here as it is in school and kindergarten life. If the parents can't pay, somebody must ; and in the case of health services the large surpluses which the Social Insurance Fund<sup>1</sup> has been recently accumulating makes this principle easier to carry out.

The children who stay in the cities during the summer are not, however, left entirely without provision. Apart from the common heritage of sun and air and river, where there is one—it would be better, by the way, if there were more provision of public baths where there is not—there is the great supply of public parks with special amenities for children. For instance, in the Park of Culture and Rest at Moscow there is a special Children's Village, covering a very large area, where children of eight years old and over can spend the whole day for a small sum, which includes all their meals. Inside this village is a boating and swimming lake reserved for the children ; playing pitches ; huts where they can do carpentry, modelling, etc. ; a

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on " The Russian Worker."

planetarium ; a whole train, four feet high, with stations, running round the enclosure ; and a staff of instructors to look after the children. It is thus possible for parents and children to come together to the park, and for the children to be disposed of with their contemporaries, while the parents enjoy their own outing, knowing that the children are all right. We were told by one of the staff, with a chuckle, that on rest days the Children's Village was almost empty during the early part of the day, the parents feeling that it would be so nice to spend the time freely with the dear children ; but that by about four o'clock the pleasure of the dear children had palled, and they were hastily bundled by their exhausted relatives into the Children's Village.

#### V. FAMILY LIFE

This brings me to the much-argued question of family life and the so-called destruction of the home, on which so much ink and paper have been expended. Obviously, from a short visit one can only offer one or two comments on this question ; to argue it out fully would entail a long disquisition on what "the home" really means, as well as a pretty complete knowledge of what the pre-revolutionary Russian conception of family life was—it was certainly not the English one. Three obvious facts must first be mentioned : first, that the facilities for changing of partners are very much greater and simpler in Russia than in this country ; second, that the enormous provision of State services, from crèche to factory kitchen, means that "domestic work," in the sense of cooking and cleaning and looking after the children, plays a substantially smaller part in the life of a Russian home than in that of an English one ; and third, that family life and personal relations are regarded generally as in the last resort subordinate to the welfare of the State, and that a State struggling, as Russia is, against enormous natural and artificial odds, may tend to override personal and family claims, although it is

astonishing, as I said before, to find how much latitude the State will allow in all but the few matters regarded as essential.<sup>1</sup>

Russians that I met declared very emphatically that family life, in any real sense, was not being destroyed, though they agreed that immediately after the Revolution there had been a tendency to throw it out of the window along with other bourgeois lumber. They say that the completely free marriage is as enduring (or as fleeting) as any other kind, and that, whereas in theory the wife who is a Party member and has been trained specially for a shock job may be ordered to duty somewhere where her husband does not wish to go, and so be separated from him, in practice adjustments are almost always made. It is pretty clear that promiscuity, and a perpetual flitting from partner to partner, is frowned upon, and that, whether or not the moral standard of the Communist Party squares with that of English bourgeois society, it is very strictly upheld, in this as in other matters.

On the question of "domestic work," the answer depends very largely on how far the critic regards cooking and cleaning, and washing of children who have been crawling on a dirty floor, or become involved with the potato-peelings, as fundamental to family life ; and it is interesting to note that the strongest objections to a communalising of these services come, as a rule, from the class which employs hired labour to do the cooking and cleaning, and sends its children away to school at the earliest possible opportunity. For myself, I have no doubt that the tightness of Moscow housing is greatly relieved, and the health and spirits of its inmates greatly improved, by the existence of these communal services. Living in cramped quarters becomes far less unhealthy, and far less of a strain, if the

<sup>1</sup> There is no space here for a description of the Soviet marriage laws. One can only remind readers of the well-known fact that men and women are on equal terms as regards both marriage and divorce, that there is no such thing as an illegitimate child, and that both the man and the woman (if she earns) have a fixed responsibility to contribute to the support of the children.

inhabitants can regularly get out of them into wider and healthier places, and if they are not cluttered up perpetually with food and washing and the preparations for food and washing, to say nothing of dirt-harbouring upholstery of various sorts. The lack of thick carpets and curtains—even of cushions !—together with the absence of coal fires, makes a Russian one-room dwelling far less frowsty than a similar one in Sheffield or Liverpool. It should not, however, be assumed that nobody in Russia cooks in the home. Some feed altogether communally ; some get their meals from a kitchen and eat them at home ; some have one meal at home ; some have a kitchen to themselves ; some share a kitchen with another family or families, and so on. There is an almost infinite variety, and, further, the tempo of Russian life makes it possible to change easily from one practice to another. As the Director of Bolshevo told us of the married portion of his charges : “ When they first marry they like to have their place all to themselves and do their own cooking—but in about six months’ time they begin to get tired of it, and come to the communal services ”: which may very well be typical. Ties are certainly looser in Russia than in some parts of the world ; but as far as I could see this does not mean that family affection has in any way ceased to exist, or to fulfil its obligations. Our guide in Moscow, who was married with no ceremony “ and seven years without a quarrel,” as he proudly said, was supporting his mother, who is a peasant’s widow, out of his own salary ; an ex-soldier of the Red Army, with whom I had tea, was assisting in the education of two nephews in his native Georgian village, and was in his turn receiving some help from a brother who was in a specially good position on a *kolkhoz* ; and so on. It does not appear, from a glance, as though natural affection had been destroyed, though possibly it may have been modified in one direction or another, by either the change in the status of women or the increase in communal services.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

What, then, is the visitor's general impression of this side of Russian life, and what lessons, if any, has it for a Socialist society in a more advanced country?

My own view, which is shared by many observers of all shades of opinion, is that in design and intention it is wholly praiseworthy and that its results are already remarkable. It is not, as yet, anything like complete ; some of it is very makeshift ; and the chance of its becoming a really model system of its own kind depends upon the Soviet Union being able to draw on, and to train, enormous numbers of men and women in the second and third rank of capacity to staff and run all their crèches, kindergartens, schools, camps, hospitals, etc., and to do it steadily, not in a burst of enthusiasm, and yet not with that undeviating faithfulness to routine which turns an institution into a prison for the mind. So far the freshness and adaptability of Soviet institutions has been their strong point, and of the enthusiasm there is no doubt. But there were cases in which it appeared that an institution which had been started with great enthusiasm was beginning to get a little tired and threadbare in its subsequent history ; and it may be that the number of these cases will increase. Also, of course, the future of these institutions depends on the degree of success of the Russian plan as a whole ; you cannot, in the last resort, improve the standards of your children if the standards of the adults do not rise also. Nevertheless, the amount of achievement is very great. It can be measured by the reduction in infant mortality, which is, of course, one of the chief causes of the rapid increase of population, by the cheerful and healthy appearance of so many of the crèche children ; and last, but not least, by the way in which the system has succeeded in utilising the energy and ability of its women for social purposes, on equal terms with men.

This last is, I think, the point on which an English Socialist State would have most to learn from the Russians. Communal institutions are not unknown here ; we have

crèches and schools that are better than anything I saw in Russia, and we can have many more of them as soon as we have the will to do it. We have health services which are of greater efficiency as far as they go, and, as soon as we decide to extend instead of cutting them down, our greater experience could make them the best in the world. We can, and, to a very small extent do, build dwellings for people of limited incomes which minimise the expenditure of labour and time in cooking, cleaning, repairs, and all the paraphernalia of keeping individuals alive ; we could build more if we chose. But we do, to a quite disastrous extent, leave the social potentialities of our women unutilised ; and if we are going to achieve a Socialist society which is really exploiting natural resources so as to make a good standard of life for all, we shall need their co-operation. We shall need to rationalise the practically unrationalised industry of domestic service, so that it involves less waste of human time and material ; to secure that those women who are unfitted for it do not have it forced upon them because they bear children, and, conversely, that those who have real gifts for one or other branch of it are enabled to employ them over a wider and more economical field ; and we shall also need to think out methods of " continued education " or " re-education " whereby women who have devoted some years to the bearing and bringing up of their own children shall not thereby be debarred from useful work, or relegated to those jobs which require no training and which nobody else wants to do. To enlist fully the co-operation of our women will involve, of course, certain changes in the general outlook on the status of women and of women's labour. Some change would automatically take place on the disappearance of a society based upon capitalist motives ; but the practical adjustments hinted at above would need careful working out. And if we can draw, in this matter, some help from the experience of the Russians, and particularly if we can remember also to copy their elasticity and the wide allowance they make for individual differences, then the treatment of women and children in



Soviet Russia may be a source not merely of inspiration, but of real practical utility to English Socialists.

*Appendix I.—Misfits and Homeless Children*

Most writers on the Soviet system have pointed out that there is an appreciable proportion (whose number is variously estimated) of the population at present living in Russia which is, to all intents and purposes, outside the system, and to which, therefore, the social services discussed in this chapter do not apply. This class includes the remnants of the ex-bourgeoisie who have not been absorbed, kulaki who have been excommunicated, beggars of various types, and misfits generally ; and the fact that they are outside the system sometimes becomes painfully obvious to Western eyes, particularly in respect of the children. Outside a Greek church in Moscow, for example, there still sit, as there sit outside almost any church in Eastern or Southern Europe, incredibly wretched women begging for alms and exhibiting, as part of their distress, children in every stage of emaciation, disease and blindness. Such a sight affords a painful contrast to the general provision for child life and health ; the English visitor comments that it could not be seen in London, and feels like demanding that an inspector from the N.S.P.C.C. should appear and take these children somewhere where they will be properly looked after. What, he asks in effect, is all this vast provision for, if it leaves children uncared for in the cities ? The answer is, roughly, that the cause is the same as that which leaves some of the roads in Moscow and Leningrad so full of large uncomfortable holes—that the Soviet health and welfare services are not derived, as English public health services are, from the idea of preventing nuisances which annoy the public eye, but are designed to carry out a complete plan of society. In England to-day it is far easier to excite public opinion over one starving man than over two millions allowed to decay gradually through the

insanity of our present social arrangements ; in Russia it is the other way round. If the general arrangements are believed to be sound, the fact that some people who cannot be fitted in, starve, excites annoyance, but no general indignation. "They can come in if they choose," is the official attitude ; "if they do not, we have neither time nor resources to compel them." When, however, the problem of those who do not come in becomes so big as to be a real social menace, the Soviet Union is prepared to take action. This happened, for example, in the case of the "homeless children" (i.e. children left derelict by the Civil Wars) who were saved through the genius of Dzerzhinsky and his collaborators of the G.P.U. by methods well pictured in the Russian film called *The Path of Life*. That problem has, in great measure, been solved ; but there are still, in various cities, homes run specially for the reclamation of homeless children ; and to my knowledge homeless children are welcomed and helped by such institutions as the Moscow Children's Village already mentioned. (It should be remembered that many of the "homeless children" and of the beggars generally are gipsies, who are traditionally unorganisable.) Much has been done, and more will be done ; but loose ends will remain for some time.

### *Appendix II.—Prostitution*

This chapter would not be complete without some reference to the Soviet treatment of prostitutes. The general attitude is that prostitution is almost entirely an economic problem—the early age of marriage makes this truer than it would be in the West. As an economic problem, it is declining fast under Soviet treatment, the main present cause being the housing shortage. The building of more hostels (of which there are some already) for girls coming to the city from the country would go far to solve this.

Before the Revolution, the large cities, like other European cities, had a large roll (said to be 20,000 in Moscow)

of registered prostitutes, who were regularly inspected by the police. In Moscow now there are, of course, no *maisons tolérées* ; and for the reclamation of prostitutes one prophylactorium with 400 beds is considered sufficient, the others having been closed for lack of inmates. The prophylactorium is an institution for educating and training the prostitutes, who are mostly young girls and many of them illiterate, to be useful citizens. They are found and collected by various means, and come in voluntarily. No questions are asked at first ; but they are, of course, medically examined and treated ; and gradually the necessary information is got out of them. They govern themselves, subject to some simple and sensible regulations ; they learn a trade (there is a factory attached), and, when they have learned it, receive the standard rates of wages and pay for their own food. It is interesting to note that in many cases the standard rate is less than their average earnings at their former profession. There are various clubs, physical culture classes, and other activities ; in fact, the life led is as normal as possible. Records are kept of those who leave, and every six months a conference is held, to which former residents come and make suggestions. The place is bright, clean and healthy-looking, and the girls seem alive and interested and not oppressed with any sense of crime. It should be added that it is self-supporting, and receives no State grant.

# ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN PLANNING

by

GEOFFREY RIDLEY, A.R.I.B.A.

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- I. The Pre-Revolution Position
- II. Soviet Planning
- III. The Main Difficulties
- IV. The Change in Design
- V. Amenities, Clubs, etc.
- VI. Conclusions

**Or**



## I. THE PRE-REVOLUTION POSITION

**T**O APPRECIATE intelligently the problem of architectural development in the Soviet Union subsequent to the Revolution, and to determine the extent to which the solution of that problem has been realised up to the present time, it is necessary to visualise the position which architecture held in Russia at the fall of the capitalist régime. Social and economic planning was unknown. Some cities, such as Leningrad and Odessa, had been laid out to a plan, but this had been done only to satisfy the tastes of the privileged classes, with no thought for the progress of industry and the welfare of the workers.

Apart from this, there was little difference as regards planning between pre-war towns in Russia and those in other capitalist countries. There was the same chaotic distribution of industries and population, the same privileged positions for the houses of the well-to-do, and the relegation of the poorer classes to slums ; the only difference being that in Russia the general standard of civilisation was much lower than elsewhere.

But rural conditions in pre-war Russia differed considerably from those in Western European countries, and in particular from those in England. In England, partly owing to the greater development of industry than in Russia, and partly to the difference in size between the two countries, contact has been made between rural and industrial workers ; the growth of our rail and road communications has brought into the rural areas a large upper-class population, which, living in close touch with the rural workers, has influenced their standard of living and has raised it to a higher level than that of many of the workers in the industrial towns, and to an incomparably higher level than that of any pre-war Russian worker.

In rural Russia such an upper-class population was unknown. Villages were far apart and communication between them and the towns very limited ; consequently the conditions of the rural workers remained primitive, and contact between them and the industrial workers was non-existent.

The problem, therefore, which faced the Soviet authorities upon the success of the Revolution consisted of a complete re-organisation of the social structure of the community, involving the re-planning of the centres of production throughout the Union on a scientific basis, and the redistribution of the population round these centres in such a way as to ensure the rational development of industry.

To accomplish this, it was necessary first to check the disordered growth of existing towns and to re-plan them methodically ; then to create new towns so located and planned that the means of production and distribution might be most efficiently organised.

## II. SOVIET PLANNING

It is not possible here to enumerate the policies which have been advocated by the different schools of town-planning experts in the Union during the last fifteen years ; it must suffice merely to indicate the general policy which has been adopted and the modifications of it which are now taking place.

In all towns, new and old, the industries form the pivotal point round which the life of the community is built up. In existing towns all uneconomic factories are pulled down, and new ones, in so far as they are required in accordance with the general re-planning of industry, are constructed in a separate zone outside the towns, and separated from them by a wide, green belt. These factories form the centres of satellite communities which are themselves developed on sound town-planning principles, and will be described hereafter. The removal of slums, redundant churches, and

other buildings, which are no longer required, has left room for the re-planning of the existing towns to suit the needs of the new community, and in many cases little of the original towns are left.

The general principle of planning is similar in both new and existing towns. Each factory, or group of factories, is organised as a self-contained community unit ; thus the workers live close to their work and are provided with all that they require for the promotion of health, recreation, and culture. The unit is divided into three separate zones, industrial, social and agricultural, each being separated from the other by a wide belt of open space, the social zone being placed between the other two. Each zone is planned in such a way as to secure the economical working of industry, combined with the cultural and physical well-being of the workers. Even the factory buildings are laid out on town-planning lines, with wide roads between them bordered by flower-beds. Close to the factory are the technical institutes, buildings for scientific research, power station and such like, all of which comprise the industrial zone. This zone is planned with due regard for transport facilities and the possibility of future expansion.

The social or housing zone contains, not only the workers' living quarters, but also the administrative buildings, schools, hospitals, and the many different types of buildings and open spaces requisite for recreation and general social amenities ; also buildings for the distribution of articles of consumption.

The third zone, the agricultural zone, is devoted entirely to food production, and where State farms have been established they have their own communal towns comprising living quarters, schools and amenities similar to those in the industrial areas.

There are different schools of town planning in the Union, some advocating the system of ribbon development along an extended arterial road, others the system of concentration over a wider area. In the light of Soviet ideals, there is much to be said for both, and the matter is still under



discussion ; it would seem unwise, therefore, to express any definite opinion in favour of either system until the present transitional period has further developed and the results of each experiment have been more carefully analysed. It is obvious that the system of pivotal distribution of the community around each particular factory, or group of factories, enables each industry to be run with the maximum efficiency and economy ; but, although the conditions of existence for the workers are admirable, it is a debatable point as to whether it is psychologically sound for them to spend all their lives in such close contact with their work.

The planning of the living-quarters has been carefully considered and various experiments have been made. The first method to be tried was that which has been universally adopted in this country—namely, two-storied cottages built in pairs and laid out in the form of a garden city. This was soon discarded ; small detached buildings were found to be uneconomical, and also it was realised that this arrangement tended to isolate families rather than to unite them in the communal life which formed the basis of Soviet policy.

Four-storied blocks of flats were then built, grouped round a large central court, similar to those which have been built in London by the London County Council, and, on a much more extensive scale, in Vienna. There are some good examples of these to be seen in Leningrad. The planning in this type consists of three- or four-roomed flats opening off each side of a series of staircases. The tenements seen were well planned and the space allotted to the various rooms was generous. Communal laundries were provided in the centre of the court, but all meals were prepared and consumed in the individual flats.

This type, though more suitable than the cottage type, was soon modified, for reasons similar to those which eliminated the latter. Area space was saved by leaving open one side of the central courtyard and shortening the wings of the building ; the communal spirit was further encouraged by diminishing the number of staircases and having one, or two, large staircases, suitably sited, leading

up to wide corridors, which extended throughout the entire building and connected the various flats. The ground floor would contain a communal kitchen and dining-room, kindergarden, laundry, etc., while individual facilities for cooking would also be given by an arrangement of small pantries leading off the corridors.

The drawback to these "court" types was that it was impossible to plan every tenement so that the maximum amount of sunlight was available for each. To meet this difficulty, the tendency to-day is to eliminate the central courtyard altogether and to build long, straight-fronted, rectangular blocks extending without a break along the street, or, in the case of new towns where plenty of space is available, placed one behind the other at an ample distance apart, this arrangement allowing each tenement to have the same and the maximum amount of sunlight. In this case the buildings for communal services would be detached from the living-quarters and placed in the most convenient position in the vicinity. The general planning is very similar to that of a modern English hospital, substituting living-quarters for wards and so on.

As to how far the demand for new houses is being met, it is difficult to determine with statistical exactitude, owing to the continual flow of the rural population into the towns. But it is safe to say that, although the results which have been achieved are amazing, sufficient buildings have not yet been provided to accommodate the incoming, let alone the already overcrowded existing, population. At present it is difficult for a newcomer into a town to obtain a room without waiting many months, and it is unusual for one tenement to be occupied by a single family. Accommodation is allotted by area. In theory, nine square metres (roughly 10 x 10 ft.) is allowed for each person, unless, as in the case of professional men, a room has to serve for work as well as living, when the area allowance is proportionately increased; but in practice, owing to the housing shortage, the area per person works out more often at seven square metres, and sometimes less.

## III. THE MAIN DIFFICULTIES

It will be appreciated that, in dealing with such a colossal building programme as that which they have undertaken, the authorities must be faced with difficulties equally colossal, and, although it is evident that these are being gradually overcome, it is clear that they are causing delay. The following are the three main difficulties :

- (a) Shortage of architects and engineers.
- (b) Shortage of skilled labour, and wastage connected with unskilled labour.
- (c) Shortage of materials.

*Architects*

With regard to the first, although many professional men remained in the country throughout the Revolution, and continued to practise subsequently, the losses caused by the war, and the cessation of training during that period and the years immediately following it, left the country with insufficient architects and engineers to cope with even a normal building replacement programme, and quite insufficient to deal with the most ambitious scheme for architectural development ever recorded in history. When it is further remembered that this scheme was to be carried out in a style that was unknown even to the experienced architects who were available, one is left amazed at their courage in attempting it, and filled with admiration at the results which have already materialised. This difficulty is being gradually surmounted, partly by the establishment of training institutes on an extensive scale, and partly with the assistance of some hundreds of foreign experts, the engineers being chiefly American and the architects chiefly German, the latter under the able leadership of Dr. Ernest May, who has been responsible for so much of the town planning.

*Labour*

The shortage of skilled labour is greater even than that of designers, and, although similar steps have been taken to increase the supply by the establishment of technical schools, there is little evidence, even in buildings now in course of erection, of any improvement in construction and general finish. The whole standard of construction is very low in all trades. In few of the many buildings visited would the plumbing have been passed by the most lenient of our own district surveyors. Joinery work is very rough, locks are of the poorest quality and frequently fail to work, electric lights constantly fail to switch on or off, plaster falls in large patches from the ceilings. Enquiries elicited the fact that as little as from 15 to 20 per cent. of the total workmen employed on a building are skilled craftsmen.

Unskilled labour also presents difficulties. Since much of this is drawn from the agricultural workers who have migrated into the towns, arrangements are frequently made that, at times when there is special need for labour to be concentrated on agriculture, these workers are taken off the buildings and returned temporarily to the farms. It would seem, therefore, that, while this transference must tend to slacken down building operations, agriculture must also suffer through the draining of the best type of worker from the farms into the towns. A similar transference sometimes takes place from building to building, as greater urgency may arise to complete one before another, and, in this case also, wastage occurs.

It will be maintained in the Union that the greatest need of the moment is to provide factories and accommodation for the workers, and that the standard of construction is a matter of secondary importance. It is probable that this policy is the right one in the circumstances, but one regrets to think of the heavy maintenance work which will soon be forthcoming, and even more the risk of a fall in the standard of living, which may take place physically and psychologically, when tenements which now look fresh and tidy

become dirty and depressing through untimely dilapidations.

### *Materials*

The third difficulty, that of shortage of materials, is being more speedily overcome than the others. This is being done, partly by reducing the quantity of materials used in buildings (for example, the reduction in the thickness of brick walls), and partly by increased production of materials which exist in such prolific quantities throughout the country. As far as structural materials are concerned, it may be said that every district in the Union is now self-supplying, except for iron and steel and, in some districts, timber. Everywhere research organisations have been set up, and these are doing valuable work in developing local resources which will require the minimum labour in production and construction.

There is practically only one form of construction used for the walls of new buildings—brick, or brick substitutes, built solid to the requisite thickness, the external face of which is rendered in cement and sand. Concrete, with or without steel reinforcement, is rarely employed for wall construction. Stone and marble, though available, is sparingly used, owing to the extra labour required for working and fixing.

In some districts more economical materials take the place of bricks. The districts round the Caucasus and the Black Sea provide interesting examples. Research carried out at Tiflis has resulted in the discovery of a product from lava deposit ; it can be obtained in large blocks, resembles pumice, and can be sawn in the same way as timber. From lava deposits is also obtained cement, while at Magnitogorsk, the new iron and steel city in the Ural Mountains, cement is being obtained from iron slag. Experimental houses are being built with mud blocks compressed by hand, and others with long reeds compressed and bound together with wire, in both cases the external face of the walls being rendered in cement. These examples will serve

to show that everything possible is being done to relieve the shortage of materials, and to the efforts made in this direction are largely due the successful results which have so far been reached.

#### IV. THE CHANGE IN DESIGN

With regard to design, the influence of the Revolution upon architecture is very marked. The sudden and complete change from capitalism to communism affected the whole outlook towards future architectural development. With this change came the desire to find an architecture which would symbolise their ideology. Architects joined in numberless discussions and produced fantastic designs and models which were intended to give expression to the industrial mentality. Finally they found what they sought in the modern architecture of Western Europe ; it will be seen that it was admirably suited to their purpose. It was becoming international, it was revolutionary, it had a directness of purpose that harmonised with the industrial temperament of the people, and its simplicity made for economy in cost, speed in construction and the minimum amount of skilled labour. But it will also be seen that this functional style of architecture needs exceptional skill and experience on the part of the designers to make it an æsthetic success, and it is here that many of the new Soviet buildings may be thought to fail.

This failure is due, partly to the insufficient training of their architects, and partly to the system under which they work. They begin their training at the age of about eighteen in some architectural institute. Students will work on designs for buildings which are actually to be erected, and so great is the shortage of architects that often designs submitted by students after only two years of study are accepted, and, while these may show considerable merit, it is not given to many architects to produce mature work at such an early stage of their training. Moreover, since

modernism is the only thing that matters, very little time is given to the study of architectural history, and the methods by which architectural problems were solved by past masters in different countries ; hence, many of the new buildings lack the essentials of good design which come with experience and careful study of the best work of all ages.

The system of decentralisation is also open to criticism. The main function of the Soviet architects is to prepare a "project" ; they work in brigades, and once the project is completed they have little if any further connection with it. The project is handed over to constructional experts, who prepare the detail drawings, cost the building, and make the necessary preparations for its erection, and often the architects who prepared the project do not see the building either during or after its completion. There are, of course, architects to whom this does not apply, but only those who are at the top of their profession have the opportunity to carry through the whole work in the same way as is done in this country. However, this system of decentralisation seems likely to be discontinued, partly because it is being found to be æsthetically unsound, but mainly because it is difficult to fix the responsibility for mistakes unless there is only one source of control.

It has had a considerable influence upon design, but that which has had an even greater influence is the industrial enthusiasm which is everywhere so strongly in evidence. Into the mind of everyone is being instilled by intensive propaganda the need for building up the industries. The engineer is the hero of the Union ; the machine dominates all Soviet constructive policy. Building is one of the most important items in the Plan, and therefore forms a fruitful source of propaganda. A visitor to some of the most notable new buildings will be given statistics about them rather than points of real architectural interest. It is the number of rooms and windows that counts, rather than the proportions of them, and while it is rightly maintained that their buildings must have a practical value, it is not

sufficiently realised that they can also have an æsthetic value, and must do so if they are to be architecturally successful.

There is apt to be a sameness about their architecture. There is little to distinguish between a school and a small factory, or a housing block and a ward block of a hospital. External colour might be more extensively employed. There are some good colour schemes to be seen in Lenin-grad, but colour is most in evidence on the lower stretches of the Volga and in the Black Sea districts. Moscow has little colour on its new buildings, while at Kharkov the cement rendering on almost all the new work is left with its natural grey colour, and consequently the buildings lack variety. But some of the Soviet architects, among them Shchushev, are trying to encourage the use of colour, so that brighter buildings may materialise in future.

For these reasons, to anyone who is acquainted with, and can appreciate the best modern architecture of Western Europe, much of the new Soviet architecture will be unsatisfying. It is the work of engineers rather than architects, and appeals by its mass rather than its composition. At the same time there are several exceedingly able architects in the Union, and many modern buildings that are very fine ; the influence and teaching of these masters, and increased opportunities for travel and study, should eventually produce even more interesting work.

Yet, when one recalls such works as the Palace of Industry at Kharkov, by Serafinov, any criticism of Soviet architecture seems to be out of place. The whole conception of it is so big and impressive that it makes one expect, quite unfairly, that, if Soviet architects can create buildings such as this, all their buildings should be equally successful.

#### V. AMENITIES, CLUBS, ETC.

But, although their buildings may be open to criticism in respect of external design and construction, in every



other respect they show an incredible improvement upon the old. Instead of a haphazard arrangement of small, badly planned, wooden hovels, crowded together so that little light and air can enter, most of them infested with vermin, there are now being erected for the workers light airy homes, well planned, not only in themselves, but in relation to their surroundings, and on a scale which must impress even the most prejudiced observer. Everywhere facilities are being given for promoting the health of the workers both in mind and body. Even in cities like Leningrad, up to the time of the Revolution the systems of sewage disposal and water supply were primitive and insanitary. Since then both have been reconstructed on modern lines, and in every town visited there was evidence that similar action had been or was being taken.

In the provision of general amenities the Soviet community is leaving the capitalist countries far behind. Whether it be a park, club, library, theatre, stadium or rest-home, all are conceived on the most ambitious and enviable scale. Not only are these provided in each town, but often the larger trades unions and co-operative societies have such acquisitions of their own in addition. Some examples may be of interest.

At Kharkov, the food suppliers co-operative has its own theatre, as up to date and well equipped as a small modern London theatre, complete with revolving stage ; alongside is their own park of culture and rest, with reading-rooms, cinema, concert-room, facilities for sport, and accommodation for a doctor who attends daily to give advice on eugenical matters.

The workers' club belonging to the tractor factory at Stalingrad, providing accommodation for fifteen hundred workers, has forty-three rooms, including two large meeting-halls, a library, and rooms for committees, study, rest, medical consultation, gymnastics, music and kindergarten ; in the basement is a shooting-gallery, and on the roof attractive loggias for sun-bathing for men and women, while a theatre is about to be added.

At Odessa is a magnificent convalescent home for three hundred and fifty rheumatic farm-workers. It stands in a natural wooded park, many acres in extent, in which is a lake with boats and swans, and a concert-room, cinema, and so on. Patients pay nothing for their stay here. It is one of the few modern buildings in the Union where colour is extensively employed, and some low-relief sculpture panels, the building being greatly enhanced thereby. The panels represent scenes from farm life and are finished in highly glazed colour.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

It will be gathered from the foregoing remarks that, whereas there is plenty to criticise in Soviet architecture, there is a great deal more to admire. Where there are failures, they are more often than not due to the legacy from capitalism which left Russia at least a hundred years behind other countries.

There is much that they can teach us about architectural development. They have progressed with their programme sufficiently to show that inestimable advantages are to be gained by State planning and control of buildings ; that the more complete the control, the more rational can be the planning ; that little can be accomplished so long as land and industry are at the mercy of private owners. They have proved that, to succeed, one must plan courageously ; that it is wiser to demolish the absurdities erected under capitalism than to attempt their adaptation to the new requirements ; that architecture must be a logical outcome of present conditions, not an imitation of an obsolete past.

They set us a striking example of what can be done by a systematic programme for slum clearance and the substitution of modern State-owned houses, the rents of which are apportioned to the means of each tenant. And we might well copy in our towns their method of planning tenements

as large blocks of flats with communal dining-rooms, laundries and kindergarten, thereby economising in cost of erection and rendering a much needed service to the workers.

In these respects the Soviet experiment has been successful in spite of very great technical and financial limitations. It is difficult to estimate the success that might be achieved if, with all our resources and craftsmanship, we were to attempt a similar experiment. As to whether Soviet architecture is as successful æsthetically, it is not possible to make an arbitrary statement, but the following is given as a personal opinion.

Their choice of the modern functional style is logical and almost inevitable. Much of the work that has been done is fine, but more is mediocre, and some ugly. Where it fails, it is because it is suggestive of mass production. The industrial revolution has spread to the creative sphere and is overwhelming it. This situation will adjust itself as time goes on. In recognising the opportunity which has been given to them, and taking it, Soviet architects have proved their worth. The ideals which they have set before themselves are very high and have already materialised in some noble buildings. It is appropriate that perhaps the noblest of them all is Lenin's tomb, by Shchushev. With this to give inspiration, the future of Soviet architecture should be assured.

RADIO, PRESS AND  
PUBLISHING

by

R. W. POSTGATE

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- I. Broadcasting
- II. Journalism
- III. Publishing
- IV. Conclusion



*The chief sources of information from which the following facts were drawn are : Messrs. Ionov, head of Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga (Moscow) ; Orlov, acting head of Gosisdatt (Leningrad) ; Kovalov, chief editor of Rabotchaya Moskva, and his staff (Moscow) ; Rzanov, editor of Vechernaya Moskva (Moscow) ; Karl Radek, leader writer and political adviser to Izvestia (Moscow) ; Taran, editor of the Communist (Kharkov) ; Eugene Hirschfeldt, Director of International Communications (Moscow) ; T. Zaitseff, Director of Scientific Programmes (Moscow) ; [Miss] Inna Marr, Director of International Broadcasts (Moscow T.U. station) ; Leonoff (Moscow T.U. station) ; Sonin, Director of the Red-Proletarian radio sub-station (Moscow) ; [Miss] Sellingson, assistant director (Leningrad radio station) ; Kesselmann, musical-director (Leningrad station) ; Tchigiyinsky, chairman of the All-Ukrainian broadcasting commission (Kharkov) ; Rosenstein, musical-director (Kharkov station). To all these, to many others, and to the interpreters, my thanks are due. None of them has any responsibility for anything stated in these pages.*

## I. BROADCASTING

**T**RANSPLANT a common Northern weed to tropical conditions and it will luxuriate and change until new flowers, new foliage and new branches make it unrecognisable to all but the expert eye. New conditions have made it change its functions ; a difference in quantity has become a difference in quality ; before long even the scientists list it as a separate variation.

So the wireless, transplanted to Soviet conditions, has assumed new functions and exuberated into strange

branches, until even our ordinary categories are sometimes inapplicable. For example, what is a station? According to Western standards there are 61 Soviet stations, of which 54 broadcast on long and medium wave-lengths and 7 on short waves. But the Russians would include 3,800 sub-stations, a figure which they glibly talk of raising to 800,000.

### *Sub-Stations*

The sub-stations show most clearly the difference between Soviet and capitalist broadcasting—a difference which may be briefly expressed by saying that Soviet broadcasting is not, as with us, a means of amusement or education, but an operating part of the average worker's life, as much as his factory or club.

These sub-stations or "receiving points" are of very low power—30 watts or so—and serve only the factory, farm, or park to which they are allotted. Seventy-five per cent. of them are town stations, 25 per cent. in villages. How many listeners this means is quite uncertain—a quite approximate guess was 8,000,000. The station consists of a small, dingy studio with a radio director seated in it. A good example is the station of the Red-Proletarian factory in Moscow, a shop with 5,000 workers making metallurgical machinery. It is a year old and the station is wired to 60 loud-speakers. The station receives 75 per cent. of its programme from the big stations, by the ether, and relays it over the wires to the factory loud-speakers. The selection is made by the director. The remaining quarter is supplied from the factory. There is a factory "art brigade" with five "circles" playing various instruments, or singing, which provides an amusement programme after their working hours. The new flats for the workers which are being built near by are wired to the station and the worker is able to switch on by merely plugging in a loud-speaker. Shortly, if the lack of wire diminishes, it is hoped to provide him with a choice of three programmes. Experiments are also being made with the use of the electric-light wiring for transmission of programmes.

The most interesting section of the programme is, however, the spoken material, consisting of a news bulletin and short speeches—about five minutes in length—by the workers on factory problems and reasons for discontent. The freedom of the workers in making these complaints is jealously guarded. No previous censorship is allowed. In some stations, the director knows only the title of the workers' subject, and always the management first hears of the criticism when it issues from the loud-speaker. The director (who is not always a Party member) is not an employee of the management, he is selected by the "art and politics council" of the factory, which is elected by the workers. He has the right of entry to any part of the factory to investigate alleged abuses. All persons, including the radio director, may be criticised. A case was instanced of a foreman who was vexed by such criticisms from a worker, and used all the power which a foreman has, to make life unpleasant for the critic. So jealous are the workers, however, of this freedom that, as soon as they realised what was going on, they so effectively resented the persecution that the foreman was transferred to another department.

Such broadcasting, together with the factory newspaper, gives a startlingly large measure of workers' control in the factory, and might suggest an orgy of indiscipline and grouching. It should be added, therefore, that the majority of the workers' broadcasts are not in the nature of direct complaints: they are far more frequently constructive in character, giving practical suggestions for better routing of materials, more economic processes, small possible improvements in technique, and so on.

A specimen day's programme (August 7th) is as follows:

<i>Time</i>	<i>Station relayed</i>	<i>Programme</i>
7.45-8.15	Moscow Local	Gymnastics
8.15-8.45	„ „	Reading of the newspaper <i>Proletari</i>
8.45-9.45	„ „	Gramophone concert



<i>Time</i>	<i>Station relayed</i>	<i>Programme</i>
9.45-10	Own station	Programme announcements
11.15-11.20	„ „	Spoken material (announcements or speech)
11.45-11.50	„ „	„ „
12	Moscow Local	Time signal
12.15-12.20	Own station	Spoken material
12.45-12.50	„ „	„ „
13-14	Moscow Local	Gramophone concert
16-17	„ „	„ „
17-17.55	„ „	Concert
18	„ „	Time signal
18-19	Post Office	Radio drama
19.30-20.30	„ „	Concert
20.40-23	Trades Unions	Theatrical concert

[The announcements were repeated so frequently for the various shifts of workers taking their midday meal ; the local station orchestra was not playing on this day.]

### *Main Stations and Programmes*

The great stations, whose programmes are being filtered continually by these minor stations through to millions of listeners, do not, on the whole, vary greatly in the character of their programmes. Moscow Trades Unions (V.Ts. S.P.S.) is an exception with its well-known international programmes.

Their programmes, however, vary in a significant way from capitalist programmes. Some sections are partly similar. The Leningrad station (100 kw., 1000 m., erected 1930, with an assistant 10 kw. station on 340 m.) gives 60 per cent. of its programmes to "art"—a general term used in Russia to cover music, literature, drama, and the children's hour. (On the day of rest, art occupies 95 per cent. of the programme.) It possesses a symphony orchestra of 60, a military band of 35, and a "folk-instrument" orchestra of 55 performers. The last named is playing less

folk music as time goes on and more formal music, sometimes even having a pianist to accompany it. However, one eighth or more of the musical programme is of original Russian music. A large proportion of this is not even printed ; the " methods committee " hears the aspiring composer and, if his work is judged of sufficient interest, puts it on the air. The station claims so to have fostered Leningrad music as to have part responsibility for producing two disputing schools of music, the Young and Old composers. Of the latter, the best known is Shaporin ; of the former, Voloshinov and Davidienko, author of the well-known symphony " Lifting up a Railway Carriage."

The rest of the programme consists, as to 20 per cent., of political matters and physical culture ; as to 10 per cent., of Government information, news and weather ; and, as to 10 per cent., of " technical propaganda." This tenth receives possibly more careful attention than any other. The titles of lectures show that they are closely identified with the development of Russian industries : " Platinum and its Industrial Uses," " Physiology as a Means of increasing one's Production," " A Problem at Angarstroy " (hydro-electric station). Workers come to the microphone and announce and describe their discoveries and inventions. Instead of taking out patents they exchange experience.

It should also be added that the political programme is strictly Communist, and, even in the art section, items are sometimes introduced with a brief explanation according to what is held to be the Marxist theory of art.

The opinion of listeners is sought ardently and appears to be really operative. Committee members enter factories and hold meetings to discuss the Leningrad station programmes and extract complaints and suggestions. " Interval " programmes are arranged of hour or half-hour length especially to please certain workers—for example, 10.30–11.30 the textile workers' interval hour ; 11.30–12.30 the ironworkers' ; " Radio-Midnight " for night workers ; and a post-midnight programme for the Far North. Over 210,000 radio sets are estimated to exist in

Leningrad ; 1 in 13 people do or can listen in ; all factories, clubs, rest houses, parks and co-operative homes are wired for radio. Sets, incidentally, vary in price from 7 to 300 roubles : it is not their price, but their rarity, which may be criticised.

Moscow broadcasting does not vary greatly from Leningrad. An official analysis of the average times given to various subjects, by minutes, is as follows : Political and press 35 ; Physical culture 102 ; Children's programme 200 ; Science, education and Leninism 307 ; " Art " 1,709 (music 80 per cent., drama, etc. 14 per cent., foreign language broadcast 6 per cent.) ; weather and information 179.

### *Ukrainian Broadcasting*

Ukrainian broadcasting shows features more similar to Western broadcasting than elsewhere. The programmes are divided into art, technical propaganda, news, and political (Communist) education. The first occupies 65 per cent. of the programme, the second 20 per cent., and the last two 15 per cent. Kharkov station has a large staff—apart from the technical staff it has dramatic artistes, singers, chamber musicians, and an orchestra of 66 performers. Kiev has an orchestra of 45, and there are similar orchestras in Odessa, Dniepropetrovsk and Tiraspol in Moldavia. The full orchestra performs six times a month. The programmes are austere—Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner, Schumann and Schubert, with some Russian and Ukrainian music. Modern music, with the exception of such composers as Delius, is frowned upon. Jazz is almost banned : occasionally modern syncopated music is performed as a curiosity, with an introductory explanation that it represents the decay of the bourgeoisie and will, of course, be disliked by the listeners. It is described by the authorities as sexual, corrupt, orgiastic and in other phrases which in the West are commonly used by the evangelical clergy.

" Technical propaganda," closely connected with the Five Year Plan, covers such items as description and

encouragement of the beet-sugar campaign, or the description of a new cutting machine and the method of handling it, by lecture or by dialogue.

The influence of listeners upon the All-Ukrainian broadcasting commission and its country (Oblast) sub-commissions is exercised as in England—by letter. Kharkov station receives some 120 letters daily.

### *Organisation and Wages*

The intention of this study is not to describe in detail the technical achievement of the Soviets in wireless, but it must be said in passing that it is difficult to withhold admiration of it. The Five Year Plan, in the production of private receiving sets, has not, indeed, been fulfilled—sets are insufficient and below Western standards, and this is to be the especial care of the Second Five Year Plan—but in the erection of stations it has been magnificently over-fulfilled. No nation is equipped to the extent which Russia now is, except possibly the United States. A station now just completed at Noginsk claims the further distinction of being the most powerful in the world (500 kw.). Seventy per cent. of a population which includes Arctic nomads is covered by the radio. Ninety-five per cent. of the many languages used in the U.S.S.R. is used in transmission.

The stations are, indeed, not yet working at full pressure. Moscow Trades Unions broadcasts only three or four hours a night. The total daily output (omitting relays) of the half-dozen Moscow stations is only 2,800 minutes. It is calculated (as a sign of the excess of potential power over actual listening capacity) that in England there are 7,000 listeners to 1 kw. of power, but in Russia only 3,500.

The conditions of the workers in radio broadcasting are those of workers in the most essential industries. The engineering staff is part of heavy industry and shares in "high qualification" conditions. The usual organisation of the "triangle" described elsewhere (director, Party secretary, trade union representative)<sup>1</sup> runs right through

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on "The Russian Worker."

the industry. The technical and administrative staff receive wages averaging 210 roubles per month : 300 to 350 is the maximum. Wage differences here are very slight. An apprentice of sixteen gets 85 roubles. The salaries of artistes and other performers vary very extensively and have risen by 100 to 150 per cent. in the last year. " Redactors "—editors of information bulletins and so forth—receive an average of 250–350 roubles, running up to 500 for non-Party members. Artistes receive 200 to 800 for a month of twelve to eighteen working days. All beyond that is paid as extra time, and salaries of 1,000 to 1,500 roubles are consequently fairly common. A collective contract, of immense length and valid for one year, concluded with the union provides that no more than 6½ hours a day may be worked, including rehearsals. Authors draw 75 roubles for a ten-minute story, anything from 800 to 3,000 roubles for a drama, and 50 kopecks to 1½ roubles a line for poetry.

## II. JOURNALISM

A survey of the Russian Press cannot hope to be exhaustive in the sense that an account of book publishing or even of broadcasting can be. The pre-war circulation of all Russian newspapers was approximately 8,000,000 ; the present circulation (excluding factory and wall papers) is estimated by Mr. Radek at 24,000,000. Papers are innumerable, or at least unnumbered. Fortunately, however, they appear to fall into certain clearly defined categories and a specimen or specimens of each category may be easily isolated and studied.

These categories appear to be : *Firstly*, the great federal papers, *Izvestia* and *Pravda*. These differ in style, content, and intention from the *second* category, which covers the local papers. These again may be roughly sub-divided into three sub-sections : (a) the local paper in the English sense, a paper devoted to the news of a city or region, (b) the factory or farm newspaper, (c) the simplest form of all, the

wall paper. The *third* category covers the national newspapers—I mean the papers issued in the various lesser republics for the use of the smaller nationalities, and in their language. These in character are hybrids of the two first classes.

### *Central Papers*

*Izvestia*, the organ of the Government, has a circulation of 1,500,000 and only the lack of paper and of skilled workers prevents it having a circulation of 4,000,000. Its head office is in Moscow, but identical copies are printed in Leningrad or other centres from plates sent by air or rail. The voracious public appetite for news, less than half-satisfied, means that the editors have little need to consult the preferences of their readers. The make-up of *Izvestia* is a direct continuation of the make-up of the radical or republican papers of last century. Leaders of very great length, such as now appear in only one English Sunday paper and in no American paper at all, are *de rigueur*; the same allusive, diffuse and convoluted rhetorical style is employed. As *Izvestia* is an official paper its task is to speak officially on foreign policy and to print and comment on decrees on internal affairs; for this such a style is possibly not unsuited. The overwhelming mass of news printed is economic in character, and austere presented. Foreign news is obtained from the solitary foreign news-agency, Tass, and eight correspondents. The criticism most commonly voiced is that both *Izvestia* and *Pravda* deal in generalities and have too little connection with the concrete facts of the people's daily life, despite the use of extra writers and belletrists on special assignments and investigations. The directors of *Izvestia* resist this criticism and declare that the body of the paper, despite the mass of leaders, speeches, and commented decrees, consists of what is really news, when regarded in the proper light. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe that it is in these circles that the theory is held that newspapers will disappear in favour of the radio.

*Local and Factory Papers*

In considering the second type of paper—the local paper—we must remove from our mind any recollection of the relatively free competition of the West. There are satirical papers like the *Crocodile* which is ruthless concerning the frailties of officials and others, and co-operative periodicals are not unknown, but the average paper is owned or authorised by a soviet, trade union or Party organisation, and follows its policy and instructions. It is as much an organ of government as a news or amusement provider.

Nevertheless, in this sphere there is less austerity and more condescension to the prejudices of the public. There are signs of a desire to take up some of the proved methods of what used to be called “yellow journalism” in the make-up and style, though not in matter. A great flood of new readers, simple-minded peasants and workers, has to be coped with; and, unlike the older politically-minded Bolsheviks, they demand simple phraseology and attractive writing. Mr. Radek, omitting himself with unnecessary modesty, considered that only Mr. Stalin and Mrs. Krupskaya (Lenin’s widow) among the established leaders could write in this new style. There has recently been started in Moscow a whole paper—the *Evening Moscow* (*Vechernaya Moskva*)—edited by Mr. Rzanov in the new style. Its circulation is 100,000; but queues wait for it and the office estimates that this figure might be quintupled if paper were available. It is in appearance very similar to a lively Paris paper—with short articles, quick news items well titled, poetry, photographs, short stories and cartoons. Well-known writers, such as Alexei Tolstoy, Boris Pilniak, Demian Byedny and Azeev, and artists such as Rotov, Yelissiev and Mor contribute regularly, and the paper runs competitions for features and what we should call “stunts.” Yet it is only the form, not the essential content, that is changed. We search in vain for the equivalent of the sex, crime, and society stories which are the chief characteristics of Western journalism. The subjects on which the

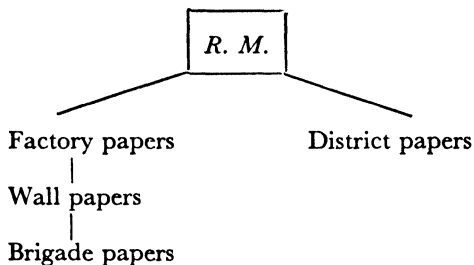
writers of the *Evening Moscow* exercise their wit are chosen by the Moscow Soviet, which has entrusted the paper with the duty of assisting in the rebuilding and reconditioning of the capital which it has ordered.

The repairing of the streets, the collection and organisation of complaints, the progress of the proposed Tube, the condition of the parks of culture and rest, the progress of housebuilding, provide material, not only for the regular issues of the paper, but for special supplements at five- or ten-day intervals. (It should be remembered that Russian papers are generally only of four pages—an eight-page paper is a huge issue.) These are organised with care, by eleven special departments, each with a manager and assistant. The most important are : (1) town reconstruction ; (2) co-operatives, trade, and the feeding of the people ; (3) culture, schools, and science ; (4) art, films, theatre, sport ; and (5) and most important, "control." This latter is a department to answer and follow up all complaints, news, and requests from workers in every industry. It acts as a great Eye on the progress of Moscow industry and a check upon inefficiency, corruption and folly. Over a hundred letters a day are received.

But the *Evening Moscow* is an eccentric among Russian papers. The norm is rather the *Rabotchaya Moskva* (*Workers' Moscow*)—or perhaps it would be more correct to say that this paper is the norm magnified. For the vast complexity of the *Rabotchaya Moskva* organisation is a development, rather than a type, of Russian journalism. A first-sight description seems easy : the journal is the premier local paper of Moscow, covering Moscow and district ; it is the official organ of the Moscow Soviet, the Communist Party, and the trade unions ; its circulation is 400,000. But the moment one enquires into its organisation and subsidiary or allied journals, their extent and number confuses one. A casual selection of daughter journals dropped on to a settee in the office over-filled it and poured out on to the floor. The Russian newspaper can only be compared to a banyan tree, with root-shoots and branch-growths ; it is one and



many, and its definition is a problem of theology rather than sociology. *Rabotchaya Moskva* has four types of journal dependent upon it. On the one hand are district papers, published as far away as Ryazan, Tula, and Podolsk. On the other are factory papers, published for every factory of importance in Moscow. These papers are not "trade papers" in our sense; they deal with the general progress of the industry, but more particularly with the passing history and production figures of the factory for which they cater. Below these are "wall papers"—large coloured sheets, drawn, written, or typed out by the workers in a department and pinned up on the wall. These are a peculiar Russian phenomenon which must be described later. Finally, there are even "brigade papers," bulletins for the use of and amusement of groups of workers engaged on a particular job in a factory. The organisation looks like this in a plan:



These papers (at least, the first two categories) are printed and appear daily, weekly, or two and three times a week. They are created and organised by the *Rabotchaya Moskva*, they are frequently printed in its works, "copy" is provided from head office and workers sent down to advise and assist. A section of the mother journal called the "Review of the Press" is partly devoted to reviewing their contents and maternally admonishing or praising them. There is a continuous flow, like sap, of information outwards to them and inwards from them.

The contents of the paper itself show the usual absence of sport, fashion, sex and crime stories. It gives very little foreign news, has no foreign correspondents and but a small staff of fully paid journalists. For completeness' sake it should be mentioned that it has the usual "departments" (Party Life, Economics, Rural, International, Culture, Press Review), but far and away overtopping the rest is one, called simply "Mass," which has no European parallel. This deals with the workers' correspondents, as they are called, who are becoming more and more important in Russian journalism and gradually elbowing out all the more conventional forms of journalism. These correspondents are no other than the average workers in a factory, who have by now been so encouraged to comment, report and complain about factory organisation and operation that the Russians cannot understand the constitution of foreign papers, nor visualise the absence of such correspondents. A law of libel indeed exists, but it is so drafted as chiefly to protect the freedom of workers' correspondents. Two hundred letters a day are received, and so vast is the material that the paper is endeavouring to encourage the substitution of common brigade letters, signed by several workers at once. The "Mass" department sifts these letters, checks complaints and investigates their origin, holds factory and other conferences to consider them, co-operates with the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection in rectifying abuses, organises "cells" to push forward any particular campaign, and co-ordinates work with the editors and staff of the subsidiary papers. To the complaints which are printed, footnotes requiring an explanation or reform are appended; and the position of *Rabot-chaya Moskva* secures that they receive immediate attention from the management.

Outside this vast mass of material there is but one page—the first page—which bears a resemblance to Western journalism. Even this is clearly part of an economic effort, rather than an instance of blandishing make-up. A specimen issue (August 16th) shows the three central columns

occupied by three stories with "streamers" across all three columns. The first deals with the production of food in the paper's area; the second with the condition of the coal basin; the third with the organisation of markets. The left-hand column is occupied by a leader, the right-hand by itemised accounts of the development of the various industries. On either side of the title of the paper is an "ear" (to use the British phrase), one black for the worst and one red for the best productive record. Appearance in the red ear entitles the fortunate comrade to a coloured certificate which is presented with some little ceremony.

Not all factory newspapers are connected with a central paper. *Stalyeva Golka*, the paper issued by the Tinyakov clothing factory in Kharkov, is an entirely independent and self-contained sheet, with a Yiddish issue twice every week. So also is *Do Pratsi*, the Ukrainian prison organ run by the convicts, whose most interesting feature is the occasional Black List of the names of the prison governors who, in the convicts' opinion, have retained ideas of punishment and have forgotten that their duty is to reform and elevate their charges.

Wallpapers, written or drawn, with photographs stuck on them, are the least developed and most primitive form of journalism: the essential cell, the amoeba. Persuasion rather than discipline, exhortation rather than punishment, is their objective. They resemble in their form, and sometimes in their crudity, the efforts of schoolboys which are passed from hand to hand when literary ambitions first begin. They contain the current news of the factory's progress under the Five Year Plan and a rephrasing in the words of the local editor of the slogan of the moment. They are changed daily, weekly, or at any odd time; they represent the immediate thought of the Russian worker on the problems of food and life that concern him, but it would be impossible to analyse them satisfactorily owing to their multiplicity. The number of such papers run by the Ukrainian farm-workers in collective farms alone last year amounted to about 60,000. A specimen Moscow paper (of

April 30th) in the possession of the writer shows their character and function. It is decorated with photographs of Lenin and Stalin and bears the title *For the Five Year Plan in Four Years !* The leader explains with pictures that the first of May will be celebrated in Russia by the workers advancing to prosperity, but elsewhere by policemen beating workers on the head. A table, with a commentary below, gives the percentage of their tasks under the Five Year Plan that each department of the factory has fulfilled. Another article, with a picture of a snoring worker, charges one department with holding up materials. Another, pictorially, accuses the chief of the kitchen of keeping the workers waiting in queues for their food and providing ill-cooked dinners. Another article is a humorous one, and there is finally a large cartoon which, as the editor proudly said, "proves that if you go to church you will drink too much vodka."

### *National Papers*

The *type moyen* of all Russian papers, as has been said, may perhaps be found in the third category, the large national papers. The *Communist*, the chief Ukrainian daily, will serve as an example. Before the war, it should be prefaced, there was no Ukrainian Press at all. There was one Tsarist paper, printed in Russian, called the *Third Region*. To-day, the Ukrainian Press has a daily circulation of over 5,000,000 in a population of 32,000,000, and it is estimated that there are about a million worker-correspondents. (In Polish Ukraine, with 6,000,000 people, the total daily circulation is said to be 9,000.) The *Communist* retains several of the characteristics of older journalism. Half of its copy is provided by paid reporters (the other half by worker-correspondents), and it has three correspondents abroad—in Paris, in Warsaw, and in Prague, which from Kharkov seems the centre of Europe. It has no "features," bar a political serial, but it resents with almost professional jealousy the claim of the *Evening Moscow* to represent the new journalism.

OR

The assignments given to its reporters are singularly unlike those given to Western journalists. They depend upon the double plan (monthly and yearly) laid down for the paper by the Ukrainian Party and Government, which is divided into three sections : industry, agriculture, and culture. In August, for a typical issue, the editor issued the following instructions : Industry—to report upon the progress and working of the Martin Owens system ; Agriculture—to estimate the prospects of the sowing ; Culture—to investigate the preparedness of the schools for the opening of the term on September 1st.

Let us turn over the pages of a specimen issue (August 20th, 1932) of the result. The first page has a leader dealing with the importance of beet production. Practically all the rest of the page is an interview with the chairman of the Vinnetskaya Soviet dealing with the beet and corn prospects of that county, which contains 40 per cent. of the Ukrainian beets. A "panel" gives the current production of all the Ukrainian metal-works (the Ukraine produces two-thirds of Russian metal). The second page has an immense article on the mechanisation of the Don coal and iron basin, with pictures of the best workers, shock brigade leaders and Party committees. Letters from workers' correspondents also appear, especially letters from collective farms. These latter are regarded as of high importance. The paper can, and does, bring cases in court against managements which continually neglect published complaints. (Three-quarters of the Ukrainian crops in 1932 were expected to be collective farm crops.) The third page has three columns of reports of State farms and grain-quota collections, and four concerning the application of machinery to beet-sugar extraction and collection. One curious item deals with the methods in which the Ukraine can aid the nascent Georgian sugar-beet industry. The new industry is not regarded as a competitor. The fourth and last page contains more workers' letters and brief items of foreign news.

It is perhaps necessary to add, in general, that there is

nowhere any non-Communist Press. No publication not authorised by the Soviet and in line with its policy would be tolerated. There is not any pretence of freedom of the Press.

There is also a light censorship exercised on the outgoing messages of correspondents of foreign newspapers. It takes largely the form of diplomatic suggestions from time to time ; it appears to have no features of interest to mark it out from other Press censorships.

### III. PUBLISHING

The organisation, and especially the finance, of book publication in the Soviet Union is conditioned chiefly by the lack of paper. Unlike other industries, the publishing industry is not essentially changed by the absence of a capitalist system. The existing conditions permit of a form of competition in which most of the devices of capitalist publishing are at least conceivable. Book advertising, it is true, does not yet exist, but there is no compelling reason why it should not in time. Cinema advertisements and theatre announcements already appear in the newspapers.

But the shortage of material for book-making, of which the shortage of paper is the most evident, means that the absolute authority of public demand, as in the West, no longer exists. So great has been the shortage of books in the past, and so great is the public appetite for them, as a result, that a publisher can print and sell almost any edition that the supply of paper will allow, of any book that is not genuinely unreadable. The publishing houses do, indeed, note what lines sell most quickly and as far as possible concentrate on those ; but they do this from choice and not by compulsion of the market. Cases of a publisher being " stuck " with unsalable stock (the commonest of all European phenomena) are still very rare : when the supply of paper has expanded they will without warning become suddenly very frequent and embarrassing. What effect

public taste has had upon book-publishing for the market has been limited to causing note to be made of the highly profitable character of text-books and of reprints from the classics.

As a result of this, it has been possible to arrange financial relations with authors on a basis very satisfactory to writers. Soviet contracts are in a fixed form laid down by a law on authors' rights (*droit de l'auteur*). Payment is made upon the whole edition printed, whether it is sold or not, and is calculated at so much per 40,000 letters. This amounts, in Western calculation, to a "signature" of sixteen printed pages. The contract form also prescribes the title, make-up and form, and numbers printed of the book. An edition of 5,000 is common. It does not cover serial rights (and the shortage of fiction in Russia may be judged from the statement that the sale of serial rights is "almost invariable in the case of any novel of any merit").

After the first edition, named in the contract, is sold, a fresh edition will be issued, paid for in a similar manner. But after the sale of a certain number of copies—a number which varies—the royalty does not rise, as it rises with a Western author who has made a success, but falls sharply. Cheap editions are issued, for which relatively small sums (varying with the author and subject) are paid.

The Russian "best seller" tends, not to be a novel, but a more serious book. Kirzentzev's *What Every Bolshevik Must Remember* has sold two million copies. In cases like this, where the author is a Communist, he is expected to take no royalties, but to put the money into financing a yet cheaper edition, or to show that he has expended it in other approved manners.

Rates for poetry are calculated at so much per line, and vary greatly. Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, the large co-operative Moscow house, pays from 2 to 6 roubles a line, and a thousand-line poem, if accepted, may well be worth 4,000 roubles, apart from serial rights, to the poet. The Leningrad State publishing house (Gosisdatt), on the other hand, values poetry at only 60 kopecks a line.

A specimen Leningrad contract arranged for the payment of 175 roubles per signature to the author—20 per cent. on signature of contract, 35 per cent. on receipt of MS., and the balance on printing. Standard payments, varying by subjects are : for text-books, 150 roubles ; scientific books, 175–250 roubles ; fiction, 250 to 400 roubles. Mr. Orlov, the acting director, stated that his endeavour was to make these payments customary for all authors, but that certain popular authors were able to insist on especially favourable terms.

Prices of books vary from 3 roubles 50—a text-book price—to 6 roubles, the price of a *de luxe* book. Calculating the average Leningrad wage at 180 roubles a month, Mr. Orlov regarded this as bringing books well within the reach of the worker. There are relatively few bookshops : books are sold to a greater extent in kiosks in factories, where instalment payments are arranged.

There is no present intention to join the Berne Convention. By remaining outside, the Russians are enabled to pirate whatever foreign books they choose. Payments are sometimes made to foreign authors as an act of grace. Foreign countries, it is true, can also pirate Russian works, but the proportion of literary output at present works heavily in the Russian favour. Besides, more and more of the appetising Russian works—by Pilniak, Fedin, and so forth—are now protected by prior publication through small publishing firms abroad, generally in Central Europe.

The organisation of publishing, despite the constitution of Gosisdatt, the vast State publishing house, remains singularly elastic. All the republics have State publishing houses, but also have a very large number of co-operative publishing houses, which up till now have been of an ephemeral and (to a Western eye) very casual character. Examples are the Moscow Writers, described by an informed observer as producing “ low-class literature,” and the Federation of Authors, which was described as producing “ high-class literature.” The exact meaning of these



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distinctions is obscure. The importance of these small firms, generally representing a "tendency" in literature and distracted by artistic disputes, is greater outside than inside Moscow, where they are overshadowed by Gosisdats and other big State organisations.

Gosisdats has just under twenty departments within itself—dealing with art books, belles-lettres, juvenile books, etc.—and in addition there are seven other large State enterprises. These are : (1) the State Technical Publishing House, whose departments deal with forestry, medicine, glass, heavy industry, etc. ; (2) the Trade Union Publishing House, subdivided by unions ; (3) the Co-operative Publishing House ; (4) Collective Farm and Peasantry Publishing House, which issues only agricultural books ; (5) Fine Arts Publishing House, handling art books, posters, etc. ; (6) the Akademia, which prints a selection of the world's best literature ; (7) the Academy of Science.

Censorship is exercised by Glavlit, and is applied after publication. The publisher, not the writer, is held responsible : the publisher's chief loss is not the fine, but the loss of the whole edition for which he has already paid. The censorship can also require the cutting out or blocking out of portions of a book. It is exercised on moral grounds, or grounds of decency, as well as political grounds. No pornographic works appear to exist in Russia, though works like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are permitted. A wave of liberalism is passing over the Russian censorship and the effective freedom of publishing is considerable. It is not, however, possible to make exact statements as to the principles and extent of Russian censorship, as the responsible officials, when approached for interviews, suffered from regrettable, recurrent and universal attacks of ill-health.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Soviet practice in radio, journalism and book-publishing contains little or no suggestions of value to a

Labour movement which has not yet achieved power : book-publishing, indeed, presents few features of interest at all. It does, however, offer examples of profound importance to a Government which is taking power with serious Socialist intentions. Largely the facts should speak for themselves, but it may be suggested that in two ways Soviet experiences should be utilised.

(1) The check of the wireless and the Press on factory mis-management (both in slowness to adopt new technique and in the survival of oppressive practices against the workers) has provided a working compromise between the idea of workers' control—theoretically admirable, but leading in the early days of the Revolution to intolerable inefficiency—and of peremptory authority by the management—highly efficient, but inimical to Socialist ideas.

(2) The wireless, which is more easily controllable than the Press, is the most efficient single means of directing production in a Socialist sense, keeping up the spirits and interest of the workers, and in preventing a retreat. It is a mistake to imagine that the removal of the present Board of Governors of the B.B.C. is a matter of minor importance for the Government. The development of "sub-stations" is a matter for further consideration.



# ARCHÆOLOGY AND THE INTELLECTUAL WORKER

by

NAOMI MITCHISON

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- I. Introduction
- II. Organisation
- III. Changes in Work and Arrangement
- IV. The Russian Archæologist To-day

of the archæologist and of his subject. The U.S.S.R., all out for the Five Year Plan, would not seem to be the best place for archæology to flourish. It is not part of the Plan, and it is typical of the learned activities which are not necessary to the material success of the U.S.S.R., yet which are apparently necessary for any adequate civilisation. Archæologists understand well enough that their work is just now less necessary (I will not say less important) than that of, say, a steel-worker. An archæologist whom I met at Chersonese said that although he realised the importance of an adequate knowledge of the past for any estimate of the present or the future, yet he knew that his job was at present a side-show and must wait until the material side of life was adequately dealt with ; for the moment not very much good archæological work could be done—the vital impulse towards it was perhaps lacking, especially among the younger people. So now what he had to do was to keep his side of life alive, keep the knowledge and the methods sufficiently up to date, and, where possible, go on with research work, until his country could afford really first-class archæology again.

## II. ORGANISATION

The organisation of archæological work in the U.S.S.R. is not centralised, although there are several central bodies connected with it. In general it is run by the various autonomous republics in the Union. The money got by taxation is distributed by the Central Government per head of the population. The Commissariats of Education of the various republics allot their share as they think fit. Museums and other learned bodies get some, but of course actual education has to come first, and that is one of the things on which most is being spent in the U.S.S.R. This means that the position differs in different republics, depending not so much on what archæological work needs to be done as on the amount of money available after the

schools and so on have had what they want. Thus in the Crimean republic there is a great deal of extremely interesting archæological work waiting to be done, partly on the original Scythian population's remains and partly on the Greek and Græco-Scythian city sites ; but the most pressing need is for adult education for the immense illiterate population, mainly Tartar, so most of the archæological research work has to wait until this extra burden of education has been dealt with.

There are, however, two central organisations, the Institutes of Material Culture, Gamk in Leningrad and Mogamk in Moscow, and these send experts about, sometimes organise their own diggings, help with advice, and, as far as I can make out, also help with money when necessary. They certainly publish accounts of work which has been done all over the Union, and I think they are usually in charge of expeditions to the remotest places, where the ordinary citizens are still uncivilised. They have their own journals and also publish a good many separate papers, well illustrated and sometimes with summaries in German. I believe they have plans for translating important papers into the main European languages.

Each Government does things slightly differently, though approximately in the same way. I will take as an example the Ukraine, where there is more money available than in the Crimea. Everyone in the Ukraine has a general education ; then come the Universities, or else the Institutes where men and women between eighteen and thirty-five can specialise, which seem to have taken the place of Universities, at any rate in some places. Here those who want to can specialise in history. No doubt there are fewer history specialists now than there may well be later on ; the intelligent boy or girl must find a constant pull going on towards the practical ; probably some young people become engineers, say, who have a natural bent towards the more learned professions, but who find the idea of them comparatively boring for the moment. At any rate this eliminates the half-hearted, and those who really want



above all to be historians or archæologists get their specialised education. Then they probably go to work at a State museum for several years, becoming "museum aspirants." Here they learn the details of their work, and also do a certain amount of lecturing, taking parties of children or adults round and showing them the exhibits. On the whole, the museums are short of workers, and all young archæologists are welcomed. This seems pleasantly different from England ! After this they gradually rise to positions of more importance and responsibility. They direct excavations ; later they direct museums. I suppose that most of the museum directors (certainly all those that I saw myself) are still pre-Revolution archæologists, but the younger men and women are coming on.

As to social origins : the few young archæologists whom I talked with seemed to be from the ex-professional classes—the parents being doctors, professors and so on. But this may have been that they were more likely to know a foreign language—I could not talk with those who only spoke Russian. In the Kiev museum I asked Professor Ernst quite at random what was the social origin of a young man who was taking round a party and lecturing to them on feudal history, and was told that this museum aspirant was the son of a peasant, and was doing very well. At that particular museum there were seven aspirants getting trained.

As to pay and general treatment : this must differ from place to place, but in the Kiev Lavra Museum, for instance, the museum aspirants get 170 roubles a month. The pay rises, until a director gets probably 600 or 700 roubles a month. Anyone doing a special bit of work gets paid extra, and I gather that some, at least, of this work is done during their vacations. The man in charge of the excavations on the ancient city of Kiev, who looked about thirty or thirty-five, was getting an extra 250 roubles a month. Their written papers are published without too much delay and are, I think, paid for. The men and women who were actually digging on this excavation, and who seemed to have a certain skill and practice, were getting 5 roubles a day.

Some archæologists, at least, get the same food rations as workers in heavy industry (i.e. the first category, which compares well with doctors, who usually only get the second category). That is to say, they are a respected class, and are looked upon by the State as at least potentially valuable.

In general, a good many excavations are being carried on in the Ukraine. Some are on ancient Slavonic city sites, some are on pre-historic sites. A good deal is being done round about Dnieprostroy, where the ground is, anyway, being dug up for new factories, and where there are already known Tripoli Culture sites. I take it that, wherever a new town or a new factory is being put up, there is someone on the look-out for remains, and they have found some interesting things in the Don basin. The excavations are probably financed partly direct from the Commissariat of Education, and partly from the special funds of the various museums. There is also a Ukrainian Academy of Science, which has its own funds, though I suppose they too come ultimately from the Commissariat for Education.

Things, as I said, are more difficult in the Crimea, though it was here that I saw most. The excavations which are going on are obviously on a smaller scale and hampered for lack of funds. Round about Kerch, where there is a mass of material, carved and inscribed gravestones have to be left in the open, where they are spoiling rather, for lack of funds to build them a proper shelter ; the museums are crowded. I think, also, there are fewer students.

Everywhere Russian archæologists are hampered for lack of foreign periodicals and reprints. They are willing to exchange for their own, but cannot at present buy them, because money cannot be sent out of the country. If anyone who reads this has any extra journals, papers, etc., I can give him addresses to send them to. At present, Leningrad and Moscow are rather better supplied, but the provinces are badly off.

## III. CHANGES IN WORK AND ARRANGEMENT

The application of Marxism to history and archæology has had some immediate and practical effects. The museums have all been re-arranged. The idea is that, instead of being collections arranged from the point of view of either the savant or the connoisseur, they should show man reacting to his environment, especially his economic environment, through the ages. In general, that is to say, they are arranged as cross-sections through time and space, and in the course of that re-arrangement all sorts of interesting matters and linkages come to light. For instance, the Sassanian and Achæmenid rooms in the Hermitage Museum at Leningrad have been re-arranged with an eye, not merely to starring this or that beautiful vase or figure, but to show what was the economic organisation of society in the ancient Middle East from time to time and how this conditioned the kind of things which were produced. While doing this the arrangers discovered a great deal about the trade between countries, the influence, say, of Rome or India, and the coins appear now, not merely as beautiful objects or as tokens of kings, but as documents showing what was happening to trade and how the people were affected. This re-arrangement also means that objects are seldom put in collections by themselves, but with other things of the same date, so that the whole tells a story of how ordinary men and women lived. Of course, this is not adhered to in a stupid or universal way ; the great vase collection at the Hermitage is still all together in one room, and most of it is likely to remain so, though no doubt, when the rooms of Greek life are prepared, some of the vases will go in together with the sculpture, bronzes, jewellery, etc., of their own epoch, which were made by the same kind of people that made the vases and are full of the same kind of ideas. When there are large collections of objects which are not in themselves very beautiful or interesting, but are rather boring to anyone but an expert, they are no longer shown, but are put away where any visiting expert can go and look

at them ; this, for instance, has been done at Odessa with most of the Second Millennium pottery and most of the enormous collection of stone babas. This is all very sound, and in practice means that the museums are less crowded and the objects are better seen.

There is also a great deal of labelling and explaining ; as mankind's economic organisation changes down the ages, so each museum has separate rooms, with clear, large-lettered explanations of the kind of society which produced these particular objects. On the walls are pictures of the kind of work people did ; in classical times these are re-drawn from vases ; later on there are actual contemporary pictures. There are quotations, translated of course into Russian, from contemporary classical and mediæval authors, and sometimes this collaboration between author and object makes one suddenly realise what it really was that Xenophon or Polybius was talking about, as one never had before. Things are made as pictorial as possible for a population which is only just beginning to read with ease. The show cases are labelled and so are the various objects, and the labels are practical, showing not only where these objects were found and what their date is, but just exactly what they were for and why they were made this particular way. This is the sort of thing one has always wanted in museums, but so far no other museums have ever done it, at any rate on anything like this scale. It is better than a catalogue, even a free catalogue, because it is more immediate and clear, and also it is much simpler to alter. With the present paper shortage, the labels, even in big museums, have often to be written on the back of old, used sheets, but that doesn't matter. It is naturally all from the Marxian point of view, but there is considerable latitude in the Marxian interpretation. Perhaps there is a tendency at present to over-simplification and a leaving out of certain factors in early society, particularly the whole religious and psychological complex, but history is always being interpreted from one point of view or another, and any new point of view throws fresh light and sets alight trains of

thought between historians and historical fact. There is a great deal of implicit or explicit social criticism, especially of the later periods, most of all the later periods in Russia ; the Moscow and Leningrad Museums have ample opportunities of showing the incredible combination of luxury and bad taste which the possessing classes displayed from the seventeenth century on, while the peasants were still living like animals. The Kiev Museum shows up the feudal system. All this re-arranging means a great deal of work for the museum staffs, but is also great fun for them. All museums invite criticism and questions from visitors, usually providing slips of paper and pencils to make it easier ; they answer the questions as far as possible and often find the criticism very helpful. I should think that in general all the Russian museums, especially perhaps the provincial ones, are considerably more visited—and on the whole by people wanting education rather than amusement—than those in other countries. There are always conducted groups being taken round and lectured to, sometimes adults and sometimes school-children.

The ethnographical museums are being re-arranged on the same lines as the historical ones and are most interesting. In practice, they are now very like the fine Scandinavian ethnographical museums, but there is more labelling and more definite Marxian and State propaganda of one kind and another. Most large museums of any kind are apt to have propaganda posters about in halls and staircases or wherever they seem applicable.

There are also, of course, various special museums, anti-religious museums and museums of Revolution ; the anti-religious museums are always in ex-churches and have collections of religious objects, held up more or less to scorn (though not sufficiently so, in one museum, to prevent guileless old peasant women from bobbing in front of an ex-ikon !), a good deal of vivid and amusing anti-religious and anti-clerical propaganda, with pictures and models, and perhaps some comparative religion, though this struck me as being rather clumsily done. The museums of

Revolution are mainly collections of propaganda and photographs ; the latter are often extremely moving, and the whole thing is usually very beautiful in an epic way.

The methods of field research have changed too since the revolution. A rather different kind of thing is being looked for. It is nonsense for us to pretend that it is possible to have completely pure-hearted archæology, looking for everything : archæologists, after all, are human ! Take, for instance, the Greek and Byzantine city of Chersonese, near Sevastopol. St. Vladimir was supposed to be buried here, and all the early digs were conducted with an eye to finding early churches ; the Romanovs were very anxious to unearth themselves good, saintly ancestors (of course they were not really descended from St. Vladimir), and dozens of early Byzantine churches were dug up. But they never bothered to look at what was underneath the churches, so most of the first Greek, and Græco-Scythian, stuff is still buried. In the meantime, the sea was, and is, breaking down the low cliff and eating up the city, so that one can swim out and see, away below one on the sea bottom, some carved marble pillar which will never be shut inside any museum. Now the excavators are interested in other things besides churches, but the churches themselves are showing something. Typical Byzantine churches are built with a cupola from which the light comes and shines down into the middle where the emperor and patriarch stand—and the congregation is left in the dark : imperialism and centralism. But here the basilicas of the same date are lighted from the sides, like the Roman ones : they are really lecture-halls, and this is because Chersonese, in view of its economic situation, was really republican in feeling in spite of being nominally under the emperor. This is roughly and shortly put, but it shows the kind of new idea which is happening. Probably many of these new ideas are too attractive to be true, and will be modified later, but it is good to find them. Ancient history is always in danger of dying of boredom, and this keeps it alive.

In general, the methods of excavation, as far as I could

tell, were most careful and up to date. In the U.S.S.R. they are hunting rather for economic organisation than for beauty or mythology or the kind of romance which seems sometimes to move the classical archæologist. But if something beautiful turns up, there are plenty of people to save and appreciate it.

#### IV. THE RUSSIAN ARCHÆOLOGIST TO-DAY

Yet I suppose the most marked change is not in museums or methods, but in people. Here I have to depend on personal impressions of the men and women I met. The several members of the Leningrad and Moscow Institutes of Material Culture whom I met all struck me as businesslike, but I did not have much talk with any of them except through an interpreter. I also talked with Orbelli of the Hermitage, a great man, I think, and something of a charmer. He was very sympathetic, and I got a tremendous impression of life and gaiety from him—which no doubt he might have radiated under any Government ! But I couldn't help comparing him a little with most of the professors I have known, who have always been rather preoccupied with their individual bothers and quarrels, the finances of the department, the difficulty of launching out into any new scheme, worries about the future and too often glances back at the good old days. Here Orbelli seemed only worried because there is no one out of work in Leningrad and so no carpenters to put up show cases in his fine new rooms ! He has plenty of students ; I expect he bullies them and they love him. His great idea of dealing with a culture is that one must know its languages and be in touch with everything about it, not only the external aspect of its pots or carpets or what-not, but its proverbs, its laughter, how people lived ; he likes to touch a pot as the potter did, to feel through his hands into his whole life. Probably the best archæologists in all countries tend more and more to do this, but seldom so whole-heartedly. I think he must be very happy ; every year

he sees things expanding round him ; his own particular job is going well ; he is not hampered. I asked him if he had been interested in politics before the Revolution, and he said, " Not much," though he was bothered by being constantly hampered in his work by outside considerations, especially the fact that the Hermitage was an imperial museum and had to look imperial ! But as the Revolution came, he accepted it, and found himself coming alive in that stream of violence and new ideas. He feels himself to be increased, to be part, through his work, of this bigger thing. The change, I think, is all to the good for him and for what he does.

I talked with another archæologist in the Ukraine who struck me—though I may be wrong—as being completely unchanged. He was in quite a good position now, probably about what he would have had anyhow ; he is a keen field worker, and had been conducting a big dig and was passionately interested in the finer details of it. He produced a good many of the usual formulæ, but it is obviously difficult to be very Marxist about the Stone Age. He was a little worried at not having more pupils ; those he has are mostly ethnologists and art students. But on the whole I kept on getting the impression that he was a French archæologist at some provincial university. In some ways he may be typical of those learned men who are not political-minded, but just go on with their job.

But the man whom I saw most of was Professor M. at Kerch. I stayed with him, in the museum, and saw how he and his family lived. I was an absolutely casual visitor, about whom he had only had a short telegram, but he could not have been kinder or more hospitable. They were glad to see a foreigner, for the thing which they perhaps mind most is the lack of contact with foreign countries. There are other hardships ; they had a bad time during the civil war, as anyone in the Crimea was bound to do ; their own house on the hill above Kerch was occupied first by Whites, then by Reds, and is now uninhabitable. There is difficulty about food ; Professor M.'s sister has to go out



every day and stand sometimes for hours in food queues. Sometimes some staple, rationed food is temporarily not to be had ; bread is always black—one realised that sometimes she, at least, longed passionately just for a piece of white bread. They have their midday meal from a communal kitchen and heat it up at home. But there is great neighbourliness about food ; once one of the old museum staff found us a piece of bread which was less black than usual, and once someone else came in with some Black Sea mackerel. Things are hard too for mothers of young children (there were several of Professor M.'s young grandchildren about the place), as they have to be constantly concerned with the material aspects of life, the lack of stuff for clothes, of shoes, of suitable food—above all, the difficulty of not being able to get anyone to help them. If a mother is working in heavy industry, there is probably a good crèche where she can leave her children, and, if she is very well paid, she can afford to hire some kind of help, but, for a woman in one of the less well paid learned professions, things are obviously very difficult. Professor M. himself was, of course, less bothered by this kind of thing ; his clothes were in a donnish state of untidiness, but I am sure that didn't worry him. He had got something out of it all which his sister, cumbered, perhaps, by serving, had on the whole not got.

He had been director of the museum since 1904. I asked him what he had thought of the 1905 Revolution ; he said he had not noticed it because he was doing his first big dig then and was too excited by that to notice anything outside. The Crimea was, in a way, rather remote from the European war, which yet did a good deal to cut them off from foreign countries. But, after the Revolution, came the civil wars ; there could be no keeping out of it then. Professor M. sided definitely ; he accepted Marxism and the Revolution. There was famine and murder. Some of the irreplaceable golden Scythian objects were stolen from the museums, but the G.P.U. found all but one again for him and shot one of the thieves. And now—he said definitely and simply that he was

a better person. He was alive now as he had not been then ; he didn't think of his subject as a separate thing, he didn't think of the past except as part of the present and future. While he is actually writing, he has to be an individual of a kind, a specialised instrument, but otherwise he doesn't feel different or shut off by any barriers of class or education. He said that over most things he got the same treatment as a worker, and that obviously made him proud and happy. He is deeply interested by all the new things which are happening, quite as excited as I was by the new industrial town which is being built beyond Kerch, fascinated by the new State-aided industry of rabbit-keeping ! Once we were coming back from a *kurgan* in a train full of factory workers from the chemical and metal works of New Kerch ; they all seemed to know him, and came into the carriage to talk to him. Two of them produced coins they had found ; one of these was a fine bronze Nero coin ; I read the inscription which he, after borrowing someone's spectacles, confirmed ; then he gave them a lecture about Nero, which they loved—they all asked questions. I felt that he and they were on the best kind of terms ; each—factory worker and archæologist—respected the special qualities of the other, but were equal as people. And they were very friendly to me as being his fellow worker. At the end the man took back his Nero coin, looked at it lovingly, and then shoved it into M.'s hand " for our museum."

M. could be very objective, too, realising, as a good historian should, that the Lenin cult is half-way to a religion. He struck me as very clear-minded, and he had the tact or good manners not to make me feel uncomfortable for being only a Socialist, not a Communist. He knows that the present discomfort is likely to last for several more years, perhaps even to get worse for a time ; but he thinks it worth while for the sake of what is happening in people's minds.

In many ways I think M. must be typical of the intellectuals who have been taken over by the new spirit of the U.S.S.R. One would think, to read some of the propaganda,

that they had all been destroyed because they had bourgeois standards of culture. The conclusion I came to about all that was—very roughly—that among the professional classes, if you were a nasty person, they said you were a bourgeois and abolished you ; but, if you were a nice person, they said you were a worker, and you stayed on in your job, often with additional facilities for work ; and, in so far as you had done as you would be done by, so you were done by as you did.

# THE FILM IN RUSSIA

by

RUDOLPH MESSEL

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- I. The Soviet Conception of the Cinema
- II. The Planning of the Industry
- III. The Actors
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## 1. THE SOVIET CONCEPTION OF THE CINEMA

WE IN EUROPE are possessed of certain preconceived notions with regard both to the theatre and the cinema. We regard both these forms of expression either as a vehicles for the exploitation of somebody or of somebody's artistic temperament, or else we look upon them as vehicles of entertainment pure and simple. If, however, we are to understand either the cinema or the theatre of Soviet Russia, we must as far as possible clear our minds of these preconceived notions. We must approach the subject with minds as open as we can get them, and we must above all things try and avoid disappointment, disillusionment and even despair, on discovering that what to us have so far seemed absolute and intransmutable values are both transient and transmutable in the hands of the Soviet. If we approach the matter in this spirit, we shall at least be able to see clearly, and we may even understand : but it is very certain indeed that, if we enter the fray in any other spirit, we shall be prevented from seeing anything of importance, a fact which in itself will be sufficient to prevent us from understanding.

In Europe and in America we certainly do consider that the cinema and the theatre exist primarily because we, as prospective and potential audiences, desire to be entertained. We may or may not be right in holding this view, a point which it is not necessary to argue here. It is, however, essential to state this point of view, typical of the capitalist world, and it is equally important to state categorically that it is in no way typical of the Soviet Union.

The cinema in Russia is looked upon as the most important factor in an all-embracing scheme of ideological education. The phrase "ideological" education means nothing more or less than education in the philosophy of

Communism. The Soviets have wakened up to the fact, which is enunciated piously whenever the cinema is discussed by maiden ladies or in the House of Commons, namely, that the cinema is a great educational force. They, the Soviets, have, along with our maiden ladies and members of Parliament, realised this fact ; but, unlike our own particular friends both within and without the House of Commons, the Soviets have taken drastic steps to ensure that the educational potentialities latent in the film shall not be overlaid. In short, they have decided not to produce anything but educational films.

Education in the U.S.S.R. is, of course, very nearly synonymous with propaganda. Which being the fact, it is not surprising to learn that nothing but propaganda films are being produced in Russian studios or shown in Russian theatres.<sup>1</sup>

To the European, trained through long habit to seek his entertainment and relaxation within the glowing portals of the "Empires" and "Astorias," this stern educational attitude must of necessity come as something of a shock. No Laurel and Hardy . . . ? Not a foot even of the Wild West, with Destry riding again and again . . . ? No Garbo . . . ? Only propaganda, propaganda, and then still more propaganda . . . ? "Where," asks the distracted European, "are we to go for a little light entertainment ?" To which the Communist will unhesitatingly reply, "To the circus ! To the dance hall, or to the parks of culture and rest ! Anywhere, in fact, where you can find it. But don't expect to find light entertainment in *our* cinemas."

The cinema, the Communist will tell you, is far too important a propagandist force for him to allow it to dissipate its energies in purely frothy entertainment. And quite often he will add with a knowing smile, "But do you find our propaganda films devoid of entertainment ?" To which one is forced to reply, "The best of them [*The Golden Mountains*] certainly are entertaining. But as for the second

<sup>1</sup> The matter of the import of foreign films will be dealt with later.

best [*The Black Skin*], I'm not quite so sure, and with regard to the third-raters [*The Quiet Don*], definitely *no* !”

## II. THE PLANNING OF THE INDUSTRY

The cinema industry in the U.S.S.R. is considered the leading instrument of propaganda for the whole of the Union. And, like every other industry, it is therefore subjected to careful and detailed planning. To begin with, the whole country is divided into districts ; broadly speaking, these districts correspond to the four cardinal points of the compass. In each region there is a central producing organisation, or large studio, which controls a series of smaller studios scattered in advantageous positions throughout the region. The central studio is in its turn controlled by the All Union Cinema, or Sojus Kino, with its headquarters at Moscow. The Sojus Kino finances these branches when and if necessary, receives and distributes their productions, and generally supervises and directs the efforts of these regional branches. In practice these branch organisations enjoy a considerable degree of freedom from interference from the parent body, their instructions being usually limited to the length of film required from them as opposed to definite specifications as to subject matter, etc.

The reason for maintaining these production centres is to enable the central organisation to be in a position to distribute films depicting one type of national life, say Caucasian, in other parts of the Union (e.g. the German Volga, or Siberia) where national life and culture are both completely different. It is maintained that this process of actually showing one part of the Union how the other parts are living will have the effect of engendering a sense of unity and corporate responsibility in the minds of the peoples so treated.

It is contended by those responsible that if you show the natives of Turkestan actual pictures of how a people so different from themselves as the Caucasians are living



their own national life, and are at the same time engaged in work for the construction of Socialism, you go far towards removing from the inhabitants of these outlying districts the sense of isolation and loneliness which is always so fundamental a trait in the characters of backward peoples. The natives of Turkestan realise through the medium of the film that they are no longer alone, but that they are part of a vast plan, that plan being the construction of Socialism, in which peoples of completely different race and nationality are also participating. Any fears that these people might have had as to the suppression or supersession of particular racial customs are thus, by the simple method of pictorial propaganda, very effectively stilled.

It is argued also that the showing to backward peoples of actual pictures of their own backwardness is by far the most efficient form of progressive propaganda. For example, at a studio in Yalta I was shown a sequence of some two thousand feet in length, which depicted a very primitive form of mowing still practised by the Caucasians. The mower, who was using a scythe, was standing on the very edge of a precipice. Below him was a drop of thousands of feet and above him a steep rocky slope to which he was secured by a rope. The picture as I saw it was unedited, but I was assured by those responsible that it was to be edited and titled so as to make it clear to audiences that for just so long as the peasants continued to use the old-fashioned methods of agriculture, for just so long would they have to continue taking such fantastic risks, expending so tremendous an amount of energy and all for a mere hundredweight of hay—whereas with the new methods . . . more hay, less time spent and less risk incurred.

It is not the object of this report to record the writer's personal views on the misuse of the cinema in the Soviet Union ; for which reason the writer is merely recording the facts as he found them, and is purposely refraining from the expression of any personal views or comments.

## III. THE ACTORS

The next point which will strike the European observer as being radically different in connection with the film industry in the Soviet Union is the fact that "acting for the movies" in Russia is a well-paid, stable, and above all secure, profession. To say that film acting in the Soviet Union offers security to the actors is to say enough to show that the Russian film industry is not only radically different from its European counterpart in matters of theory and ideology, but that it is also completely different in practice and in general management.

Any graduate from a high school can, if he has the desire and the ability, become a film actor. The man or woman in question would present himself at any one of the dramatic schools which are attached to the bigger studios all over the Union. And there, provided that it was found that the applicant was possessed of the necessary ability, he would be trained for a certain period, after which he would enter the ranks of the studio workers at a minimum wage of 200 roubles a month. (The wage of an ordinary actor, from a featured player to an extra, ranges between the 200 roubles minimum wage and 500 roubles, which is the maximum figure.)

You become an actor ; you work perhaps in one picture, and then, instead of being paid off and left to shift for yourself, you are kept on at the full rate of pay until the studio requires your services in another picture. You might have to wait one day, two days, or perhaps as long as a week, or, on the other hand, you might go straight from one picture to another, the point being that, once you have entered a studio, you are secure in a job for life, provided, of course, that you desire to keep it.

These conditions of employment are in force in all studios all over the Union, and apply, of course, to carpenters, technicians, electricians, etc. ; in fact to the entire staff of any and every studio.

With regard to the stars, they have stars even in the U.S.S.R., who receive what is definitely the equivalent of star pay. Whether or no this treatment of stars fits in with the general philosophy of Communism the reader must decide for himself, but in making this decision he would be well advised to remember that film stars in Russia are for the most part well-known stage figures, and so have to be paid overtime for work done at the studio during the day, while at the same time they are still doing their regular job at the theatre at night.

For the featured player to rise to stardom in Russia would be difficult : and it would be difficult for the simple reason that the majority of Russian films are constructed for the purpose of exploiting an idea as opposed to a personality.

The fact that unemployment has disappeared from the face of the Soviet Union has made it almost impossible for Russian film producers to include " crowd sequences " in their films. The modern Russian film is therefore designed to employ as few extras as possible : if, however, it should happen that a crowd sequence was absolutely essential to the general idea of some script which the studio had decided to produce, the only thing that the director could do would be to wait until the employees of the nearest factory were having their weekly day off and then to tempt as many of them as he possibly could with the offer of 25 roubles for a seven-hour day in the studio. This line of action is, on the whole, successful, but it is not sufficiently successful to warrant the indiscriminate production of crowd scenes. Many workers, I learnt, could be persuaded to earn a little pocket-money on their days off, but many more, I was informed, preferred very naturally to have their days off to themselves.

A crowd means anything over two hundred. A crowd of not more than two hundred can be assembled by getting every available hand in the studio, from a stenographer to a carpenter, on to the set ! It is after two hundred that the real problem begins.

## IV. THE ORGANISATION OF THE FACTORY

A film factory (studio), like any other factory in Russia, has its factory committee, etc. This committee is not only responsible for the labour conditions and wage rates within the factory itself, but it is also possessed of the deciding voice when it comes to a matter of saying which of the scripts under consideration for production shall or shall not be produced. For all scripts which are accepted for production in Russian kino-factories have to be passed by the factory committee. Sometimes these scripts are merely criticised and sent back to the author with the committee's recommendations, written, so to speak, in the margin ; but at other times, I was given to understand, scripts even from the pen of so eminent a man as Dovjenko (producer of *Earth*) are rejected in their entirety ! From the foregoing one can only assume that there must be occasional happy moments when both factory committee and scenarist find themselves in harmony, and when a submitted script is returned to the author marked "Alpha plus." Should an absolute deadlock arise, the committee has the last word.<sup>1</sup>

It is also interesting to note that, while the choice of scripts to be produced lies entirely with the factory committee, outside organisations, local Soviets, etc., are possessed of the right, which they frequently exercise, of criticising the films served out to them, and also of submitting scripts to the Kino-factory committee. These scripts are considered in the usual way, and frequently, I was told, found suitable for production.

This system of outside criticism is considered by the committee as a reliable barometer of public opinion. In view of this power of criticism, it is argued that, if the

<sup>1</sup> I was interested to note, in view of the Soviet claim to "broad-mindedness," etc., that an entire sequence depicting female nudity had been excised from Dovjenko's *Earth*. This sequence, it was argued, had certainly no pornographic intent—but it was feared by the committee, I presume, that it (the sequence in question) might be mistaken as such (pornography) by the man in the cinema, and by the woman also.

general public were not satisfied with the films shown to them, it would either say so in the form of criticism, verbal or written, or else it would submit its own scripts for production as well as its own criticisms. Provided always that no more than two scripts are submitted to any one kino-factory by an outside organisation during the course of any one year, and that these scripts are produced (even if slightly amended), the argument is a good one.

And, lastly, with regard to studio policy, the Soviet is trying to produce as many "sound-films" as possible, and is concentrating on the "sound-film," as opposed to the talkie, as a means of competing effectively in the foreign market.

*The Road to Life*, the first attempt in the direction of a sound-film suitable for foreign consumption, has certainly enjoyed a tremendous success: I would say, however . . . which reminds me that I promised earlier to steer clear of personal opinions.

The Soviets intend to continue the production of silent films, because the silent film apparatus is actually portable, and therefore eminently suitable for use as an instrument of propaganda in what are literally the backwoods. (No talkie apparatus is as yet portable in any but the advertiser's sense of the word.)

#### V. THE ATTITUDE TO FOREIGN FILMS

English, American and the majority of German films are not very well thought of in modern Russia. The great majority of these foreign films, it is contended, are completely out of tune with the spirit of the Five Year Plan: a contention which, when all's said and done, is fundamentally correct.

Such films as *Kameradschaft* and a German film entitled *Rasputin* (silent) are shown pretty widely throughout the Union. *Kameradschaft*, with its internationalist moral, is obviously suitable for Socialist consumption, and so also is

any film that deals at all truthfully with the life of Rasputin. Such a film could not help being anti-monarchist. So far so good—but how does all this theory fit the fact that a film called *Dr. Jecks*, starring Harold Lloyd, enjoys a wide popularity in the Soviet Union?

*Dr. Jecks*—one of Lloyd's earlier and more amusing films—was being extensively shown in Russia in the summer of 1932. Which fact does not make it any the easier to reconcile Harold Lloyd with the "spirit of the Five Year Plan."

On the whole, I think that Harold Lloyd has defied all attempts which have been made to ideologise him, and that somehow, unideological and amusing as he is, he has just slipped into the cinemas and on to the screens of the Soviet Union. And, once having slipped in, it is not likely Lloyd will slip out; he is likely rather to remain as a refreshing novelty in the cinemas of Soviet Russia, and as yet one more reminder of the old proverb which insists that exception proves the rule.

## VI. THE OUTLOOK

The Soviet cinema is looking forward; it is continually probing and experimenting. Neither the Russian cinema nor the Russian theatre are greatly concerned with such time-worn maxims as *ars gratia artis*, nor yet are they primarily concerned with art itself. Art to the modern Russian is the servant of education and propaganda, and so long as art in the abstract, or works of art, can be pressed into the service of propaganda, for just so long will both art and works of art be used, but not for one moment longer.

At Kiev, for instance, they are starting on a production of *Don Quixote*. *Don Quixote* is to be a costume picture, with the script of the film adhering very closely to the original work. And, as far as propaganda goes, there is certainly no reason why one line of *Don Quixote* should be changed to make it fit and proper for Soviet consumption.

As against this, however, the Kamerny Theatre in Moscow produced *Hamlet* early this year. But *Hamlet*, unlike *Don Quixote*, had to submit to a very drastic form of reshaping before it could be considered either fit or proper for Soviet consumption. The production was given a twist which made it clear (?) that Hamlet's desire to murder Claudius was by no means a personal matter, but rather in the nature of a meditated *coup d'état* designed to remove a villainous oppressor of the poor. To emphasise this idea, the Ghost was represented as a pure fake, a sort of Hallow E'en affair got up by Hamlet himself and used for the especial purpose of enlisting the support of the Army.<sup>1</sup>

The Russians, we see, are willing to use the established classics, so long as these classics can be made to harmonise even remotely with the general spirit of the Five Year Plan. For plays of so utterly romantic a nature as *Romeo and Juliet* they have no use whatsoever. This statement about *Romeo and Juliet* was made categorically, and repeated to me by several persons who are responsible for play and film production in Russia to-day.

With regard to *Othello*, I was informed by Meierhold that its modern equivalent is *Le Cocu Magnifique* (a Belgian play of doubtful merit), and that the last-mentioned play has therefore replaced the Shakespearean drama on the Russian stage.

I would add, in conclusion, that *Carmen* still holds the stage in modern Russia. It cannot exactly be said that *Carmen* fits into the Five Year Plan, nor yet are the modern productions of Bizet's opera in any way reshaped: the foreign observer is therefore driven to the conclusion that *Carmen*, like Harold Lloyd, has somehow slipped in, a fact which a very little further reflection reveals to be perfectly consistent behaviour on the part of both the lady and gentleman in question.

<sup>1</sup> The writer being ignorant of all but the barest necessities in the Russian language, was therefore forced to take the facts *re* the *Hamlet* production, not, unfortunately, as he understood them, but as they were reported to him. His informant on this occasion was Meierhold, a well-known Soviet producer.

## APPENDIX

### SOME NOTES ON FOREIGN TRADE







THE FOLLOWING short note does not, of course, pretend to be a description of the system under which the foreign trade of Russia is organised. It is thought, however, that the few points mentioned in the note are of sufficient general interest to justify its inclusion in the Report. Even the most general view of Russia is incomplete without some slight sketch of the place taken in her economy by foreign trade. As regards the subject-matter of the note, timber was selected as a comparatively simple instance of an exportable commodity—of some interest from an administrative point of view.

#### *The Barter System : Estimates of Exports*

The foreign trade of Russia is essentially a system of large-scale barter. During the First Five Year Plan there has been such a need for imports of machinery and the like, that the first step has been to see, "What can we export?"—and then in some cases there has to be a yearly estimate of production, home requirements and exportable surplus. As regards grain, for instance, the crop is estimated on reports from the villages in July, in August, in September and, for the fourth time, in October. The reports are checked to some extent by expert investigation and by such methods as an aeroplane survey and sample reaping. Estimates of home requirements are largely based on the previous year's consumption. These estimates are worked out by the Central Statistical Office and sent to Gosplan and thence to the Council of Labour and Defence. There have been some errors in the estimates of the quantity of exportable surplus—so far as I could discover, of the order of 5 to 20 per cent. of error—and obviously the estimate must still leave uncertain the price at which the grain can be

realised. As regards timber, another important export, the determining factor really is—how much foreign markets will stand. Foreign complaints of dumping, in the sense of sudden floods of timber exported to be sold at any price, have in fact been directed against the Swedish and Finnish exporters rather than against the Russians, who plan their exports ahead in the light of market conditions. Timber exports from Russia have, as regards quantity, priority in practice over internal requirements ; but less than 15 per cent. of the total production of timber has been exported. Plans for the year's export of timber are made in the previous August : if the estimated exports prove excessive, the timber is kept and used in Russia. I had no opportunity of investigating oil exports, but I understand that, as regards both oil and timber, the estimates of the exportable quantity have been pretty accurate.

### *The Administrative Arrangements for the Export of Timber*

There are some interesting points as regards the export of timber. Although there is a Timber Ministry (Narcomles), the body charged with the export of timber (Exportles) is subordinate, not to the Timber Ministry, but to the Ministry of Foreign Trade (Narcomvneshtorg). That Ministry is responsible for preparing the balance sheet of foreign trade. It estimates the available exports and the imports which can be purchased with that quantity of exports and with any credit available. One important reason for the excess of imports from Germany over that of imports from England, although exports to England have been very considerable, is that the three year credits, which Russia asks in her purchases of foreign machinery, have been available in Germany but not in England. Just as the export of timber is administered by the export authority, not the timber authority, so in the organisation of the State bank (Gosbank), although one of the eight or nine departments of the bank is concerned with timber, financial arrangements for the export of timber are effected

through the foreign business department of the bank and not through the timber department.

The timber export department (Exportles) applies in the first instance to the Timber Ministry for its export requirements. It has always received as much as it asked for, but its requirements as regards the district, from which the timber is to come, have sometimes been altered. The Timber Ministry designates the districts, and Exportles then makes contracts with the trusts which attend to the production of timber in those districts. There are five or six such trusts, including, for instance, a White Russian trust and another trust for the large area north-east of Leningrad (Archangel, etc.). I think that the buying prices are usually rouble prices, based on the foreign market prices converted at the official rate of exchange ; but I am by no means sure that this practice is invariable. It is, however, clear that, for accounting purposes, the foreign currency obtained by Exportles is converted at the official rate of exchange. It seems probable that, in view of the actual internal value of the rouble, this process must involve either Exportles or the trusts in a paper loss ; for the cost of production in internal roubles must be greater than the sale price in foreign currency, if the latter is converted at the official rate. It is, in practice, little more than an accounting difficulty ; for whatever the exporting timber organisation loses on paper in this way will be counter-balanced by the gains on paper of some importing organisation, e.g. for machinery, which will be in the converse position. The actual foreign currency obtained by sales of timber is transferred by Gosbank (or one of its branch organisations) and made available for the purchase of imports. The quantity of timber exported has not, in practice, been limited by any difficulties of transport from the interior : the limit has been, as above stated, the requirements of foreign markets.

Only a small proportion of exported timber has been carried on Russian ships. Charters are made through the State chartering agency (Sovfract) as brokers. Sales are

usually on c.i.f. terms, the seller effecting contracts of carriage and insurance and including the costs in the price charged. Insurance is sometimes effected with the State Insurance Department, but often, at buyer's request, with English insurance companies.

G. R. M.

## A NOTE ON THE NEW FABIAN RESEARCH BUREAU

**T**HE WRITERS of the essays on Soviet Russia, collected in this volume, were members of a group organised by the New Fabian Research Bureau to investigate Russian problems, particularly with a view to finding out how far Socialists in this country could profit by the experience gained in the establishment of Socialism in Russia.

The New Fabian Research Bureau was constituted to promote inquiry and research into Labour and Socialist policy. Although working in co-operation with the Fabian Society, it has an independent membership and issues its own publications. It works unofficially, in such a way as not necessarily to commit the Labour Party to its conclusions, but in the closest possible co-operation with the official bodies.

The Bureau does not promise immediate results. Its programme of research is meant to spread over a considerable period of time. Its object is therefore to organise all the skilled help it can command for accurate research, to form a basis on which the Labour Movement can expand and adapt its policy in the light of changing conditions.

If you are interested in the work and conditions of membership of the New Fabian Research Bureau, please write to the General Secretary at 23 Abingdon Street, London, S.W.1. (Telephone Victoria 2829).



